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# FIRST THINGS

October 1990
Number Six

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

## Evolution as Dogma: The Establishment of Naturalism
**Phillip E. Johnson**

Responses by: William B. Provine, Gareth Nelson, Irving Kristol, Thomas H. Jukes, Matthew Berke

## Memoirs of a Lutheran Boyhood
**James Nuechterlein**

## What Families Are For
**Gilbert Meilaender**

Also: The Demon in the Jewish Soul • Repenting of America • Abortion and the Neutral State • The Real John Courtney Murray

Reviews and Opinion: Martin E. Marty • Robert P. George Jessica Gress-Wright • Quentin L. Quade • Kenneth R. Craycraft, Jr. Russell Hittinger • Dean C. Curry

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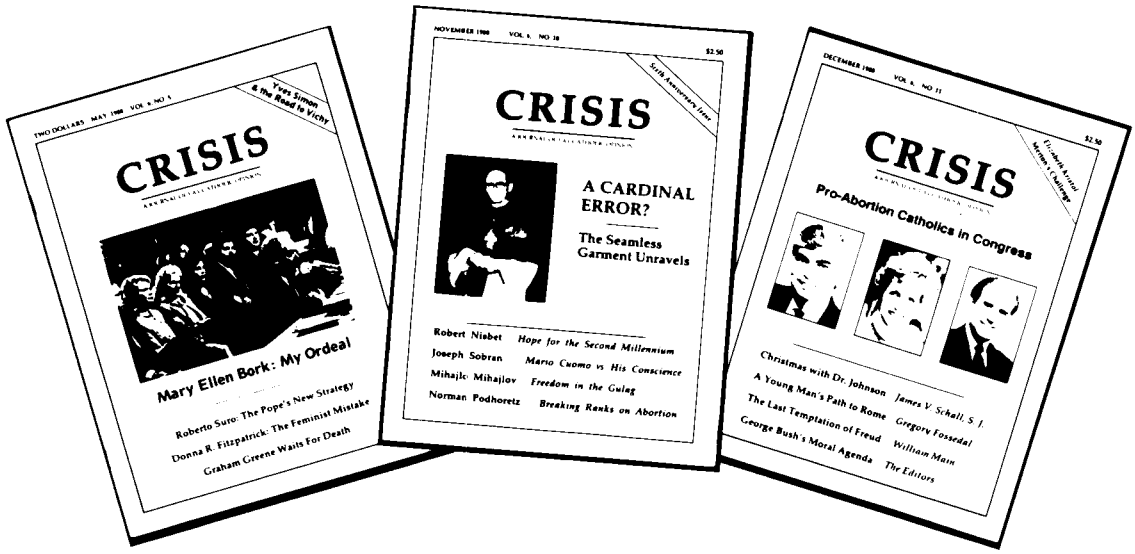
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OCTOBER 1990 • NUMBER SIX

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# FIRST THINGS

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# Correspondence

## First Amendment Understandings

I was disappointed in Michael W. McConnell's article ("Taking Religious Freedom Seriously," May) because of his efforts to link the reason for the First Amendment with recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions. There simply is no such link. For example, McConnell argues: "This is not to say that everything the court has done under *Lemon* is wrong. There are, indeed, practices that advance a particular view of religion (usually, if not always, generic Protestantism), and these *should* be invalidated. Spoken school prayers are the most notorious example. . . ."

There is not a scintilla of evidence to support the theory that those who formulated the First Amendment intended explicitly or implicitly to bar "spoken school prayers."

The First Amendment is literally a prohibition against federal law: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ." On its face the First Amendment has nothing whatsoever to do with practices in local schools. The U.S. Supreme Court created such a link . . . when arbitrarily deciding that the Fourteenth Amendment "incorporated" the First Amendment. . . .

The recent Supreme Court cases which have invalidated laws or practices because in conflict with the First Amendment are not directed at federal laws. In fact, as Justice Stewart pointed out in *Engel v. Vitale*, the First Amendment—as interpreted by the majority—"imposes a lesser restriction upon the Federal Government than does the Fourteenth Amendment upon the States."

Again, Mr. McConnell can search high and low and he will not find any evidence that those who framed the Fourteenth Amendment intended it to have an effect on "spoken school prayers." . . .

The First Amendment was adopted, *inter alia*, to prevent Congress from passing a law establishing a religion or prohibiting the free exercise of a religion. There is no nexus between these purposes and recent Supreme Court invalidations of state law under the authority of the First Amendment. Any effort to articulate a connection is bound to fail because it cannot withstand a reading of the words of the First Amendment itself. Take "religious freedom" seriously. Yes, but also take the Constitution seriously.

Michael Minnis
Oklahoma City, OK

**Michael W. McConnell responds:**

Mr. Minnis is, of course, correct that the First Amendment originally applied only to the federal government. The question, however, is whether the rights protected by the First Amendment are among the "privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States" that were extended to the states by the Fourteenth Amendment. There is substantial (though not unequivocal) historical evidence that this was intended by the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment. The school prayer decision (*Engel v. Vitale*) is a logical application of that principle.

## Homosexuality and Religion

. . . I must agree with Richard John Neuhaus when he argues in "Homosexuality and the Churches" (May) that the gay movement does raise the possibility that "Christian doctrine and morality are fundamentally in error."

Neuhaus gives credit to religious celibates for "offering up the entirety of their being to God." In the next paragraph, he claims "homosexuality is sterile." Either you accept on faith that gay sex is more "sterile" than celibacy, or you don't. Neuhaus doesn't mention Genesis, but I will: it's not at all plain to me why gay sex is more perverse or unnatural than God removing Eve from Adam's side. From this founding myth, much else follows in Judeo-Christian ethics. My own belief is that it is our distinctly *human* nature which allows us to create diverse



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cultures, and that Eve deserves honor for eating first from the Tree of Knowledge. Knowledge is risky, not sinful in itself. . . .

When the Supreme Court denied gays the right to privacy, Judeo-Christian tradition was explicitly cited against us. Defending separation of church and state, seven hundred of us were arrested at the Supreme Court. Even privacy must be defended publicly. As for the psychic destruction of gay people within churches, those gay people who choose to reform their religions have serious work to do. Others of us do not share the faith; and in the public realm of civil rights, we advise the churches to lead, follow, or get out of the way, because we're coming through. . . .

Scott Tucker
Philadelphia, PA

## Capitalism and Conservatism

Jerry Muller's "Minding Our Manners and Morals" (April) scored several good points in an argument devoted to the thesis that capitalism can support as well as subvert conservative values. Nevertheless, his argument completely ignored two of Christopher Lasch's most telling critiques.

First, Lasch points out that the drive for efficiency and greater productivity in the market has so eroded wages that . . . in 1976 fewer than 40 percent of wage-earners' salaries were sufficient to support a family. Thus *economic* constraints more than the "culture of consumption" are exerting the pressures presently pulling many lower-middle and working-class families apart by drawing both spouses into full-time, inflexible jobs and pushing the kids into inadequate day care, after-school care, even evening care.

Technological "remedies" for this problem such as microcomputers linked by modem are often class-specific: jobs that permit individuals to gain greater flexibility by such devices usually require a costly college education, while excluding the craft skills in which many working-class people excel. In fact, technologies that can give middle-class people greater flexibility have impoverished the working experience of many wage-earners by taking over tasks that formerly required great skill, permitted liberty for creativity, and engendered pride in workmanship.

Second, Muller's assigning of "therapeutic culture," "some strands of contemporary feminism," and the "Playboy philosophy" to a space outside the market ignores Lasch's contention that all express the spirit of acquisitive individualism and the exaltation of choice *par excellence.* Indeed, the rise of the therapeutic culture is inextricably bound up in marketing physical and psychological "cures" for ills which owe their identity and sometimes their very existence to expectations and pressures produced by the market. . . . The Playboy philosophy's embodiment of a culture of consumption is obvious. So also feminism's deification of choice, whose exaltation several historians have linked to the rise of markets.

Conservatives' reluctance to address market-generated inequities has historically driven lower-middle and working-class people to alliances with cultural radicals despite their overwhelming preference for traditional, family-oriented values. Lasch's communitarianism may not answer working people's problems, but dismissing them with banalities about capitalism's "double-edged" properties *vis-à-vis* traditional values will do little to win the crucial support of families laboring under capitalism's constraints.

Timothy D. Hall
Skokie,IL

## Against Muddling Through

Thomas Derr's remarks ("In Favor of Muddling Through," May) stand out like an iceberg in an otherwise well-ordered sea, encouraging relativism instead of "absolutism" in our politics at a time when the latter has won out over the former on almost all fronts and when our remaining problems have resulted from the former. Instead of prodding our legislators to be more forthright on the issues, Derr seems to want more of foggy bottom's traditional and at times comic evasiveness. Perhaps Thomas Sowell is right in his remark that "politics is the art of misstating issues."

. . . History shows that compromise is a policy of good government only as a last resort, not as the central, guiding principle Derr promotes. All too many examples in this century alone show the error of such thinking. Besides, Americans are too fuzzy-minded as it is without further encouragement. The battle of ideas, whether in the journals of opinion or the halls of Congress, must proceed. For it is through ideas that we achieve consequences, as Richard Weaver taught forty years ago. And Ludwig von Mises warned us that "only by a battle of ideas can a decision be reached." And he added, "In this conflict of opinions everybody must make up his mind and take a definite stand." . . .

W. Edward Chynoweth
Sanger, CA

## Newspeak?

Surely many of your readers must have trembled as I did at "Post-Cold War Newspeak" (June/July). Was our cherished First Things to become another voice of right-wing reaction rather than of Christian conservatives? . . .

Will First Things be telling us that we are not responsible ourselves for our nation's problems, that *Sojourners* did it or the liberals and the left? Are we to be reading that it is the politicians who ruin society or will we (as I continue to hope) read that we have nothing to fear as long as we citizens care and tell ourselves the truth?

Before we write about "the right emphasiz(ing) civil and political rights" needn't we remember Joseph McCarthy and Jesse Helms and Theodore Bilbo and Richard Nixon and Representative Smith from Virginia? Were those [men] representing "civil and political rights"? Surely we cannot claim they were represent-

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ing the "liberal left.". . .

Conservatives [would] do better to be concerned with the awful legacy of the Reagan Right—not paying our way. James Baker can tell us that we should be pleased that foreigners are willing to buy our national assets with their yen and marks. But the inexorable fact is that every year since Reagan cut taxes we sell about $200 billion of heritage permanently to foreigners. In exchange for that we take trinkets—Infinitis and VCRs. . . .

We can be certain that capitalism is an engine which produces huge wealth without pretending that conservatives can be proud of our postwar record. I am one who believes that, more than any one thing, our nation needs a credible moral authority. Conservatives would be much more credible if we separated ourselves very recognizably from the racism and greed and excessive self-concern that is so much the hallmark of the reactionary right.

. . .Thank you for so much in previous issues. But please let truthfulness and the log in our own eye be among the "First Things."

John E. Conner
Strafford, PA

## Prolife Passion

I was offended by Christopher Lasch's suggestion in "Conservatism Against Itself" (April) that some complex sociological explanation is necessary to explain why abortion "elicits such passionate emotions or why it has become the object of political attention seemingly disproportionate to its intrinsic importance."

If there is anything more intrinsically important than the abortion debate I can't imagine what it could possibly be. To deny its importance is like denying the importance of rape, lynching, or the Nazi Holocaust.

I can't speak for abortion advocates, but abortion is extremely important to prolifers because of our compassionate concern for the millions of innocent children who are being aborted. The lives of our unborn brothers and sisters are as precious as the lives of us who have already been born. Why anyone with any moral sense would find it difficult to see the issue this clearly is what I find difficult to understand.

Jerry C. Stanaway
Elmhurst, IL

## THE ORGANBUILDERS

The name of the one organbuilder was Craft,
the other Dream, both descendants
of an ur-figure, Creation. To graft
metal to wood, not to look askance
at fanatics in the guise of shepherds,
and to listen with both delicacy and might
was required. A duration. Death herds
them and the congregation toward night,
night and the great golden-boulevarded day.
And the work proceeds. Plastics used,
computers daily, silences called prayer.
Ancestry and hi-tech fuse,
in ways not even savant visitors can perceive.
What's finally dedicated has no name.
There's no name for all this. Give leave
to time: Time and timing, flame
and flaming, weld and Spirit. Mystery
and hands' midnight precision.
Of these things no one's written history
satisfies. As in marriage, decision
comes into configuration with grace.
Men write books explaining wars.
Men, women, and children enter this place
to imagine another. The pipes are doors.

**Charles Vandersee**

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FIRST THINGS
OCTOBER 1990

# Repenting of America 1492-1992

Congress has created the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission. To date, twenty-two states have established similar commissions to coordinate a wide range of activities celebrating the discovery of America. The National Council of Churches (NCC) is having none of it. In May the Governing Board of the Council adopted a statement titled "A Faithful Response to the 500th Anniversary of the Arrival of Christopher Columbus." The statement declares that "what some historians have termed a 'discovery' in reality was an invasion and colonization with legalized occupation, genocide, economic exploitation, and a deep level of institutional racism and moral decadence." In a three-page statement, the "criminal" history of America since 1492 is recounted in terms of theft, "ecocide," rape (two times), colonization (five times), racism (four times), slavery (seven times), exploitation (eight times), and genocide (nine times). Little wonder that the NCC concludes that 1992 is not a time for celebration but for "reflection and repentance."

According to the statement, the American experience has been one of unmitigated disaster for the "indigenous peoples" of the Americas and of the "African Diaspora." The people of modern Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines, we are told, are also the victims of the European invasion, as are Asian immigrants who were "torn from their families and cultures by false promises of economic prosperity" and found instead "labor camps, discrimination, and today's victimization of the descendants facing anti-Asian racism." It is altogether a sorry tale, riddled with the "complicities" of the Christian missionary effort that is guilty of "forcing conversion to European forms of Christianity," of "the desecration of religious sites, and other crimes against the spirituality of indigenous peoples."

The draft of the statement first came to the Governing Board in its meeting of November 1989. Many thought it "extreme" and "one sided." By a very close vote (56 to 49) it was returned to the committee for further work. The Governing Board is not composed of radical activists from the church-and-society curias but of the responsible heads of the Protestant and Orthodox member churches and their official representatives. In November almost half of them apparently thought the draft offered an accurate account of the 500-year history of European and other non-indigenous peoples in the Americas. A comparison of the November draft and the statement adopted six months later reveals only one substantive change. This sentence was included: "What represented newness of freedom, hope, and opportunity for some was the occasion for oppression, degradation, and genocide for others." In the judgment of the Governing Board, the first clause in that sentence made the revised statement more "balanced" and therefore acceptable.

The statement indicates that the European "invasion," despite what some mistakenly thought it "represented," has been entirely negative in its consequences, also for the Europeans. "For the descendants of the European conquerors the subsequent legacy has been the perpetuation of paternalism and racism into our cultures and times." And of course, for the non-Europeans the consequences were and continue to be catastrophic. As documentation for its construal of the American experience, the statement cites the arrantly leftist Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. Mr. Zinn and those who mistake him for a historian passionately deny that they are anti-American. They are, they insist, "prophetically" pro-American in calling upon Americans to repent of their founding history and continuing influence in the world.

None would deny that, in the course of the European settlement, many brutal things were done to the indigenous peoples of this hemisphere. At the same time, what the NCC statement romantically describes as the "spirituality" of the pre-European



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Americas included such unpleasant items as human sacrifice and the ritual slaughter of enemies. It also included the rigorous subordination of women, which may explain why this statement, uniquely among NCC documents of recent years, does not mention sexism. In making its case for the assumed superiority of indigenous cultures, the statement invokes the authority of historical fantasist Vine Deloria, author of *Custer Died for Your Sins* and *God is Red.* It is odd that the NCC should expect (if indeed it does expect) that Americans will be persuaded to repentance by the declared enemies of almost everything that constitutes their experience of America.

To be sure, the barbarity and decrepitude of indigenous cultures does not excuse the brutal deeds of European settlers. But a less simplistic account might render a better appreciation of the ambiguities involved in the interactions between peoples. There are no available criteria of justice or injustice when it comes to the massive migrations of peoples over the centuries—whether in Europe, Asia, Africa, or the Americas. Nor does the NCC statement suggest any such criteria. It contents itself with applying retrospectively the radical rhetoric of the present, calling us to repentance for our criminal past.

There are yet deeper difficulties. "What do you mean by 'we,' white man?" Tonto famously asked the Lone Ranger. And so we might well ask the NCC. What does the first person plural mean in this statement? Remove blacks, Asians, Native Americans (North and South), and the contemporary people of Puerto Rico and Hawaii, and who is left to do the repenting? Does repentance apply only to those who can trace their lineage in the New World to the beginnings of the European "invasion," or is it required also of those whose forebears were Jewish or Italian immigrants in, say, 1890? In demanding repentance, the statement is wondrously silent about the NCC's criteria for determining morally exempt groups, except that they must be non-European.

The "we" in this statement would seem to include everyone who belongs to a group on which the NCC has not bestowed victim status. It is, as a result, a very WASP statement. When the NCC says that "we Americans" must do this or that, or are guilty of this or that, "we Americans" essentially means white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. That usage reflects the touching indifference of the dominant member churches to their disestablishment and marginalization in American life. Presumably Roman Catholics, or at least those of European descent, are honorary WASPs for purposes of allocating guilt. (One remembers that Christopher Columbus and his criminal gang were Catholics, after all.) The NCC usage—intending to absolve of America's sins those who possess victim status—excludes minorities from the definition of "we Americans." Given the NCC's portrayal of America, it is a compliment to be so excluded.

For those of us who are left to do the prescribed repenting, some troubling questions arise. Are we to repent of what we now do and are or of what our forebears did and were? Apparently both. And what if we did not have any forebears who indulged in slavery, rape, colonization, theft, and genocide? The suggestion is that we all did have such forebears, and, if we can't find them, we can borrow some guilt from a (white) neighbor's family tree. Having aligned ourselves in contrite solidarity with our putatively criminal past and present, what might it mean to repent? Repentance involves doing something about it, as in "amendment of life." So what should we do about our sins? Should we go back to where we or our forebears came from? Or, as some suggest, should we make "reparations" by handing over to the remaining indigenous peoples the wealth and industry produced during the centuries of "colonization"? And what about blacks, Asians, Hawaiians, and others who have prospered by their "complicity" in the crimes of the Europeans—should they hand over their holdings to those who have not prospered? Should Native Americans surrender wealth from oil, minerals, and timber, all of which are of value only because of the European exploitation?

On these and other questions raised by its call to repentance, the NCC says nothing. In fact, the call to repentance is vacuous, entirely lacking in content. The only "fruit of repentance" suggested by the statement is that we should call to repentance those who are declared to be the oppressor class. Since there is no clarity about who belongs to that class, the only possible result of heeding the NCC jeremiad is that those outside the morally exempt victim categories should feel terribly bad about being Americans. Making people feel bad about themselves is, apparently, the purpose and pleasure in issuing "prophetic" pronouncements.

One news report carried the headline, "NCC Condemns Arrival of Columbus." The statement indeed does that, while also condemning all who have profited from the original "invasion." These are very suggestive condemnations. Would the world be better off, would the indigenous peoples of the Americas be better off, if the Europeans had never arrived? Would it be better if there were no United States of America? The statement answers these questions, at least implicitly, in the affirmative. What are the alternative and morally approved ways in which the natives of the Americas might have related to the rise of the West in world history? Or should they have maintained their sovereignty and spirituality in splendid isolation from world history? And how might they have done that in the face of the economic, military, and, yes, cultural superiority of Europe?

None of these questions are addressed. Like condemning the conquests of Caesar, the rise of Charlemagne, the invention of the steam engine, or numerous

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other historically pivotal events, condemning the arrival of Columbus in America is nothing more than the indulgence of speculation about the "what ifs" of history. In this case, however, it is not an idle or innocent indulgence, for the entire point is to vilify the American experience. Outside a few religious and academic ghettos of frustrated radicalism, almost all Americans believe that, all things considered, the consequences of 1492 are reason to celebrate. With specific reference to the United States, they believe that, on balance and considering the alternatives, it has been and continues to be a force for good in human history. The NCC has, once again, declared that it does not believe that.

Whatever we think about other aspects of the European settlement, the statement raises one question that drives to the heart of Christian self-understanding. It calls on Christians to repent of the evangelism that, it says, destroyed native spirituality and religious beliefs. The unavoidable implication is that the thousands of missionaries who gave their lives in preaching the Gospel were wrong; in fact they were engaged in criminal activity. If that is true, it would seem to have some very large significance for redefining the Christian mission. Further, in calling "the church" to repent of its missionary activity, the statement would seem to be reading out of "the church" the overwhelming majority of the indigenous peoples who are now, and have been for generations, Christian. Just as they are excluded from the America that is condemned, so it seems that those who belong to the morally exempt victim categories are excluded from the church that is condemned. Put differently, the NCC would seem to be saying that it would have been better if the indigenous peoples had not become Christian. That is a remarkable suggestion to come from leaders of Christian churches.

The missionaries are accused of "destroying native religious beliefs [by] forcing conversion to European forms of Christianity." The forced imposition of religion is indeed to be condemned. But as a historical generalization about what happened, especially in North America, the statement is quite inaccurate. Or perhaps the statement's complaint is against the "European forms" of Christianity, although it is hard to know what other forms of Christianity Europeans could have preached. One also keeps in mind that most of the Europeans who now stand condemned had their "native religious beliefs" replaced in the evangelization of Europe some centuries earlier. Would the NCC really have us believe that missionaries such as Augustine, Boniface, and Cyril and Methodius were engaged in criminal activity for which somebody ought to be called to repentance? Judging by this statement, it would seem so.

The oldline churches of the National Council are in important respects the institutional bearers of the moral legacy of the Puritan and constitutional founders of the American experiment. Those earlier Christians spoke of their enterprise as an errand in the wilderness, a light on a hill, a new order for the ages. A more emphatic repudiation of their vision can hardly be imagined than this statement by the NCC.

At least the NCC cannot be accused of conforming to the *Zeitgeist* in this case. The statement was debated and adopted in the exhilarating months of the Revolution of 1989, the demise of communism, and the almost universal acclamation of the American experiment. People who can write and approve a document such as "A Faithful Response" obviously live in crippling alienation from their country, their culture, their religious tradition, and the promising "signs of the times." The statement is sobering evidence, if further evidence were needed, of how far the oldline churches of Protestantism have wandered from their once responsible role in American religion and public life.

The jeremiad is a venerable genre in American public discourse. Americans need to hear, many want to hear, a considered word of moral judgment and guidance from the churches. But they will, with justice, turn a deaf ear to embittered screeds of historical falsehood, logical incoherence, and near-hysterical execration of their past and present.

Contrary to the NCC, and contrary to superpatriotic boosters as well, the observance of 1992 is not morally unambiguous. Nonetheless, it should be a time of celebration. Such celebration is not an exercise of arrogance but of gratitude. Despite the sin that mars every human endeavor, the history of the West in the New World has been, on balance, one of achievement and blessing for humankind. With specific reference to the ideas and ideals of the American experiment, that history continues to represent, in the words of a president who was not unacquainted with moral ambiguity, "the last, best hope of earth."

# Opinion

## The Demon in the Jewish Soul

*Marc Gellman*

Demons surface. For most people, demons surface in nightmares, but for us, for Jews, demons seem to surface in history. Pharaoh, Amalek, Nebuchadnezzar, Titus, Torquemada, Chmielnitsky, and Hitler were real demons. They killed real Jews. The night demons can be forgotten, but not the demons that remain when the morning breaks. These demons have changed something

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in the Jewish soul. I cannot say what the change is precisely, but it amounts to this at least: we Jews cannot fully trust the world again.

An op-ed piece last spring in the *New York Times* by Seymour Martin Lipset shows it. He tells of a successful, urbane, cosmopolitan New York Jewish publisher who confessed to harboring the deep belief that Gentiles go home at night and dream of killing Jews. Lipset believes that the wild paranoia of this man is present in some greater or lesser degree in the mind of most Jews. When set against the fact of Jewish power and prestige, Jewish wealth and status, this paranoia about the world's Jew-hating might seem incomprehensible. But this is the demon in our soul, and no simple ceremony will exorcise it.

There are things for the world to learn and things for us to learn about our demon. There are reasons for our paranoia, good reasons (if one can speak of a collective neurosis in this positive way), reasons which perdure despite our power. To begin with, the only meaningful Jewish statistic: we are a people who are today three million fewer than we were fifty years ago. And this despite fifty years of Jewish babies and good medicine. We were at least eighteen million in 1940 and we are perhaps fifteen million today, and in that time the population of the world has risen from three to five billion people, so our relative percentage of the world's population is smaller still.

The world must understand what happens to a people who cannot return to the land of their forebears and find distant relatives who will welcome them back home. Irish-Americans can go to Ireland and visit family and friends in their ancestral home, Italian-Americans can renew and freshen their roots in the soil of their native Italy, African-Americans can return as free people to a mostly free Africa and sort out the meaning of slavery in the context of a living and enduring African culture. But where can an Eastern European Jew go to taste the old food and sing the old songs and pray in the old synagogues? The great Jewish centers of Europe are dead, and the synagogues burned down or almost empty. We are cut off from our past and so we must leapfrog back to the past of King David and try to replace our roots in Europe with roots in the state of Israel. But Jerusalem is not Vilna, Beer Sheba is not Krakov, and every time we try to reminisce, the demon in our soul wounds us with the searing knowledge that our European past is, like us, turned to dust. All that and more is what the world must learn about the demon in the Jewish soul.

The world must understand what happens to the psyche of a people who must find a way to cope with an event within the memory of living Jews in which one out of every three Jews in the world was murdered while essentially nothing was done to stop the carnage. These are more than statistics, more than numbers. They are the arithmetic of devastation, and they must be understood, as Judith Miller has pointed out in her new book on the Holocaust, "one, by one, by one."

Arthur Hertzberg astutely points to these numbers as the explanation for the stridency and excesses of Jewish defense organizations in response to even peripheral threats (to wit: the excessive fuss over Louis Farrakhan and Jesse Jackson, or the instantaneous denunciation of some intemperate remarks by Cardinal O'Connor). The residue of guilt for doing so little to try to stop the Holocaust remains as a part of our demon in every institution we have built after the kingdom of night was destroyed. The specter of being indolent in the face of catastrophe twice in one generation is simply too terrifying for any Jew or any Jewish organization to bear. On the day of their induction into the army, Israeli soldiers march to the top of Masada and utter the oath, "*Masada lo yipol od*"—"Masada will not fall again." At some time in his or her life, every Jew in the world has taken that oath.

The world must also learn that the demon in our soul is the first warning call to the world whenever freedom is imperiled. Today Europe, east and west, must decide which of the voices freedom has unleashed will be the voice of the new Europe. Perhaps it will be Vaclav Havel's Jeffersonian compassion, or perhaps it will be Jean-Marie Le Pen's quasi-fascist and anti-Semitic National Front. Either way, it is the attitude about the Jews, the pitiful remnant still alive in Europe, which will tell us everything else about the new world aborning there. A united Germany may be dominated by the green shirts or by those who dress again in brown shirts. In others' treatment of the Jews lies the barometer of decency, the litmus test of freedom, the yard stick for human rights, the truest measure of decency and democracy in the world, and it is the demon in our soul which makes us cry out. But it is still the world's choice to listen or turn a deaf ear to our warning cries.

In recent months, Jews all over the world were expecting an attack on Jews in Russia. The fear was so real that in early May Jewish defense organizations sent squads of reporters to cover the impending pogrom. And while we were waiting, the attack came in France. It was an attack on dead Jews. The desecration of the Carpentras cemetery was a message that the demon still lives not only in our fears but also in the world. When even dead Jews are not safe from attack, how can we be blamed for not trusting the world again?

How do you tell your child about the demon? My son Max plays first base, goes to camp, does not pick up his socks, and has never once had to fight his way home through groups of bullies shouting, "Dirty Jew!" He is just like most middle-class American kids, and so when he asked me to explain the events at Carpentras, and why people would dig up a Jewish body and mutilate it, and why they hate us, I did not know what to say. I told him, of course, that the whole world was not like that, but not so long ago the whole world was just like that.

Now is the time for my son Max to choose what to believe. He must decide whether to trust in his normalcy,

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or fear the news story which caused his father to cry over the morning coffee. The demon is knocking at my son's door, and I fear he will be different now. But truth to tell, I also hope he will be different, because we are the rememberers and it is the demon who makes us remember.

I want Max to understand that the deal we made with the world was not honored. For two thousand years, from the time of the Roman conquest to our own age, we Jews made a deal to live in the world in a condition of political powerlessness. At the very moment the Jewish defenders of Masada were taking their lives rather than submitting to Roman rule, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai went to the Emperor Titus and asked him for the right to open a rabbinical academy in the city of Yavneh in return for which he would not urge or foment revolt against Rome. The deal was based on the belief that without political power, the Jewish community would not be a target for attack because no prize would be won in attacking a powerless community. But this deal did not comprehend that we would gain economic power, and would need Roman emperors and the emperors of a thousand empires to protect us. By and large, we have learned from history that the emperors were not willing.

Political powerlessness coupled with economic prosperity was, we now understand, a deadly combination. In 1302, Pope Innocent III, realizing that almost 80 percent of church lands were mortgaged to Jews, canceled the debts of the church to Jewish money lenders. He understood that the Jewish community could not protect the wealth it had accumulated because of the flaw in the deal Yochanan ben Zakkai had made with Titus. In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella explored the new world with confiscated Jewish money and expelled the Jews from Spain because they realized that the Jewish community could not protect the wealth it had accumulated because of the flaw in the deal Yochanan ben Zakkai had made with Titus. After 1933, Hitler armed the Third Reich with confiscated Jewish money because he, too, realized that the Jewish community could not protect the wealth it had accumulated because of the flaw in the deal Yochanan ben Zakkai had made with Titus. Only in America, the land of a democracy born of the dispossessed, could wealth be protected. And now Israel with power and will protects the people and its wealth and future.

Protection from vulnerability is the fetish and foundation point for any informed modern Jewish life. However, it must come to each of us, in the night, or in a moment of uncertainty in the day, that perhaps America and even Israel are just like all the other places; that perhaps we have not built the walls high enough or amassed enough power or might to protect what we have earned. If Russia, a great land of eleven time zones can fear being invaded again from the Balkans, and the world can honor that fear, why can the world not honor the fears of a little people who cannot ever believe they are truly safe?

The curse of the Jewish people is that we must live with the demon, that the world will never let us live in peace. But the world must also live with a demon, the knowledge that it created the demon which torments us so.

There are also lessons for us to learn about our demon. Jews must also grow from the horrid wisdom of the past. There are several lessons we must learn and are trying to learn and with patient friends and peace will surely learn.

We must learn that although we were victims, we are not victims now. We have power now and security now and wealth now and we are part of the elites of the world. Our state of affairs in the diaspora (Russia excepted) has never been better and our state of affairs in our State, though constantly endangered by threats from real enemies, is strong and politically powerful. Tempting though it is to ignore these irrefutable facts, we must face them and alter the way we think about ourselves in the world because of them. We cannot in good faith both pursue power and also cloak ourselves in the moral innocence and righteousness of the victim. Vigilance must continue, particularly in Israel, where the threat is palpable, but we cannot imagine that we do not control our destiny, and we cannot continue to maintain that our behavior even in Israel is solely the result of external hatred.

When FDR met with reporters after *Kristallnacht* in 1938, he said he had no plan and no commitment to make for the emigration of German Jews. When Bush and Gorbachev met in June, one of the highest agenda items after arms control was the emigration of Soviet Jews. Perhaps 300,000 Soviet Jews will be released in the next two years. The world is different today than it was fifty years ago, and in a word, the difference is Jewish power. Lipset points out that there are thirty-one Jewish congressmen and seven Jewish senators, a representation well in excess of our percentage of the population. The world is different today for us and the reason is Jewish power.

Consider two recent New York stories as telling signs of this change. A grocer in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn was involved in a racial incident as the result of an argument with a customer, while at the same time across town on Wall Street a fabulously wealthy investment banker was convicted of insider trading violations and forced to pay a six hundred million dollar fine. Now, if fifty years ago one had been asked to guess which of these two was the Jew and which the non-Jew, the prudent guess would surely have been that the grocer in Brooklyn was the Jew and the investment banker was not. Of course today, that guess would be wrong, and the difference is Jewish power.

We must accept the reality of Jewish power and we must accept moral responsibility for the uses of power. Whether on the West Bank, or on Wall Street, we are not the victims any more, and we cannot shrink

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from the accountability power imposes and requires.

Another lesson we must learn from the demon in our soul is that we must learn to trust Christian love.

Elie Wiesel reminds us that only the killers are guilty. We must acknowledge both Christian complicity as well as Christian heroism in the face of death. Rabbi Harold Shulweis from California is now engaged in a project of surpassing moral eloquence. He has formed an organization to help poor elderly Christians who saved Jews during the Holocaust. This is not a repayment for an old debt. Rather it is a statement that only the killers are guilty, and we as Jews can come to acknowledge, and believe in, and even trust in Christian love.

I can trust my friend Thomas. Tom is a priest, and I know he would shelter me if the demons should rise up again. I know this because we are dear friends and I have come to trust him. We became friends when I decided to silence my own demon and believe in Christian love. We do a television show together in which a priest and a rabbi who like each other try to explain their traditions to each other on the air. Our show, "The God Squad," seems to have helped lots of folks begin to understand their neighbors and this understanding may lead to trust or something like trust.

In this experience of working together, Tom has begun to understand that the symbols of love for him are often symbols of hatred for me. So Tom came to understand that the cross planted in the ashes of Jewish men and women and children at Auschwitz was not a symbol of love and reconciliation for me, but rather a triumphant return of the crusaders' cross to another field of Jewish blood. And so Tom and I have silenced the demons between us. I do not believe that Tom dreams of killing Jews.

I will say, however, that the demon in me did surface towards the beginning of our relationship. I do remember feeling for more than a moment this dark thought, "If they come to get me and my people, my friendship with Tom will be useful in saving some of us." I am ashamed to have felt that even for a moment, but I am not completely ashamed because I know the demon is in my soul and I know the demon cannot be easily exorcised. However, now I trust Tom with no reservations. We are dear friends and soul mates. I do not believe, I *know* that Tommy dreams of a world where I will not be afraid, and where Max can grow to be just a first baseman and trust the world much more than my grandparents and a little more than me.

Truth to be told, we have not only demons but also hopes embedded in our collective Jewish soul. We possess a tradition which, though buffeted by history, has not been morally impoverished by the vicissitudes of history. The same Jewish tradition which contains a song of thanks to God for drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea also contains a custom of dipping one drop of wine out of the kiddish cup on Passover for each plague, in sorrow for the Egyptian lives that were lost in the Exodus. The same tradition which produced a prayer asking God to pour out His wrath on the Gentiles for what they have done to us, also produced a law which tells us that when we hear a Gentile in prayer who praises God, we must answer, "Amen."

Perhaps it is the amen that will drive away the demon in our soul and help us finally to find each other.

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# The Educational Vise

## *Quentin L. Quade*

The widely noted appearance of John Chubb and Terry Moe's *Politics, Markets & America's Schools* reminds us again of the fundamental problem in American educational policy: the disposition in every state to fund the public schools at often lavish levels and to tax citizens accordingly, while at the same time providing little or no tax relief to parents who want their children to attend independent alternatives. Through a process that has been at work for decades, the state-owned institutions get bigger and more bloated, and the independent alternatives are squeezed increasingly, as in a vise. One jaw of the vise is the ever-increasing state and local taxes, especially property taxes, required to support the huge costs of state schools. The other jaw is the need for rising tuition in the independent schools. The upshot of these combined pressures on parental choice is an extremely unfair "competition" whose result is growth in the state-sector proportion of educational activity and shrinkage, often to the point of disappearance, of worthy independent-sector alternatives.

If the facts of the matter are as noted—and they are not in serious dispute—the question arises: Why should anyone care? What is at risk? In what sense are we justified in arguing, as I think we are, that this is a situation bad for education and bad for a free society?

The first and most basic bitter fruit of today's policy is that it tends to create an effective monopoly for public schools in each state and city in the United States. And these monopolies exhibit normal monopolistic traits: inefficiency, high cost, and non-responsive behavior. Despite huge outlays, we are regularly told (a) that public education, especially inner-city education, is in crisis and (b) that the only solution for the crisis is greater outlay. At the very same time, great success stories in inner-city education occur routinely in the financially struggling but educationally productive independent schools that spend dramatically less on a per-student basis than do their public counterparts. The public elementary and secondary systems today seem to operate more for the benefit of the teaching unions and the administrative bureaucracies than for the students and parents they are

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supposed to serve. When one considers their monopolistic status— they need compete neither with independent options nor with the rest of the public budget, since typically they have stand-alone budget authority—this is not surprising.

A second crucial part of today's crisis in public schools has to do with the relative absence in those schools of rigorous teaching about ethics and of insistence on related ethical behavior. The reasons for this are evident, though too seldom acknowledged. Through no fault of their instructors and staff, public schools are paralyzed as teachers of and insisters on serious ethical standards. Two basic social realities reduce the schools to lowest-common-denominator standards. First, since they are obliged to reflect the whole community and that whole community often does not have widely shared values, the public schools cannot speak clearly on many crucial issues. Second, through the debilitating intrusion of legal entanglement and challenge, by which small groups can so often frustrate even large and clear majorities, the public schools are often prevented from speaking forthrightly even on issues where a general public consensus exists.

In the vacuum thus created, we find predictable absurdities. So, for example, we dare *not* call upon religiously based moral precepts to counsel against premarital sex, but we *must* provide contraceptive or abortion advice even if it serves to legitimize promiscuity among fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds and tramples on the moral beliefs of countless parents. By contrast, the independent school, precisely because it does not have to represent the whole of society, and because it is less susceptible to legal manipulation, can both teach and insist on clear ethical standards that reflect the school's founding principles. The expectations thus created—before the fact, and freely accepted by all who enter—in turn create an atmosphere in which serious learning is possible. And that, no doubt, is a substantial part of the reason such independent schools, even in the most disadvantaged sectors of our cities, have had so much success with the students lucky enough to attend them.

The third reason for criticizing the public policy that invites and even necessitates the problems noted above is that it attacks freedom of educational choice for parents and children. The obvious—and entirely legitimate—state interest in education is that society's children be educated to the full extent of their capacity, for the sake of both the child and the general public benefit of an educated citizenry. But that state interest does not lead necessarily to the conclusion that the best way to achieve this objective is a monopolistic public school system. Where it leads ideally is to the opportunity for parents individually and collectively to shape schools that reflect their most basic values *and* achieve society's objective of a well-educated citizenry. The radical economic disadvantage that current policy imposes on these natural parental instincts basically thwarts them, and it saps society's will to create and support a varied, competitive, lively array of educational alternatives. The most deadly dimension of this prevailing policy is that it hurts most the poor and otherwise disadvantaged elements of our society. The wealthy can afford, if sufficiently motivated, to pay taxes and to pay private school tuition as well. The middle class find it increasingly difficult to manage the combination. And the poor, whose children could most profit from the excellent educational environment typically provided by the independent school, find that option effectively closed to them.

What has been described is an educational problem of monumental proportions. It goes a long way toward explaining why we spend more and get less, and why the final educational "product" is increasingly suspect when compared to various international competitors. The sad truth of today's policy is that for a large and growing portion of our youth there will be no effective education, and there will be no good way for those youngsters to catch up. Is there a way out of this situation?

Educational vouchers, given to parents in place of the massive direct subsidies pumped into public monopolies, could attack many of the educational problems here described. And, while attacking those problems quickly and forcefully, the process would also restore the creative freedom of Americans, especially disadvantaged Americans, to employ schools that reflect the values they most cherish and most want to pass on to their children. A voucher system, usable at public and private schools, would be a liberating opportunity for the independent educational sector, but it would not, as is often charged, constitute an attack on the public system. Indeed, a voucher program, by restoring vitality and a competitive environment, would probably be a strong incentive for public school improvement. Above all else, a voucher system would give instant hope to poor parents that they, by intelligent choice, would be able to ensure that their children would not be victims of an ineffective educational experience. This could have a dramatic impact on the current "pipeline" problem: disadvantaged youth never advancing far enough in pre-college education to get into the collegiate stream, which is increasingly the prerequisite for social and economic advancement.

And the downside for a voucher system? There is no downside, except for those tied by self-interest to the current state monopolies. They would unaccustomedly be forced to compete.

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# Where Babies Come From

*Robert P. George*

Recent reports from a French laboratory contain some good news and some bad news for the prochoice movement.

The good news is that abortion is not the taking of human life. Studies conducted by the French geneticist Jacques "Mad Jack" Junot of the Institut Genetique in Paris reveal that, contrary to prevailing scientific opinion, human genetic material is not present until birth. (According to Professor Junot, the birth process triggers a genetic transformation of the fetus into a human being.) Therefore, as prochoicers have long contended, killing the fetus—which, in its early stages, looks more like a small fish than a child—is not murder.

But the Professor's findings also contain bad news for those who wish to "keep abortion safe and legal."

The early fetus, or embryo, *is* a small fish: Professor Junot's studies establish that what eventually become human beings begin, genetically speaking, as snail darters. And it is a federal offense to destroy a snail darter. Thus, abortion, at least in the early stages, is even now illegal in the United States.

And there is more bad news for abortion rights advocates: Professor Junot's research shows that even in the later stages of fetal development, when the fetus has ceased being a snail darter, it becomes genetically *pinnepedic* before its transformation into a human being at birth. In other words, the late fetus is, in reality, a baby seal.

Of course, baby seals are protected somewhat less strictly than snail darters. They may lawfully be killed by members of the Okeach Eskimo tribe of Northwest Alaska, who have relied on the meat and fur of baby seals for their self-preservation throughout the history of the tribe. Congress created a special exception for the Okeach in its 1987 Baby Seal Protection Act. So, technically, abortions of fetuses once they have reached the seal stage are permissible if performed by members of the Okeach tribe.

The problem is that Okeach Eskimos refuse on religious grounds to engage in social intercourse with non-tribe members; which means that anyone wishing an abortion must first be inducted into the tribe. The tribal induction ceremony, in which the person seeking membership must ritually slay a dozen baby seals with a blunt instrument, is followed by a one-year waiting period. So, even where women are desperate enough to kill baby seals on the Alaskan beaches, by the time they are eligible for tribal membership their fetuses would already have evolved into human beings.

At a hastily called press conference, a spokesperson for the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) said that her organization would seek a Supreme Court ruling declaring federal laws protecting snail darters and baby seals unconstitutional. At another press conference, however, the Society for Animal Rights (SAR), a long-time political ally of NARAL, made it plain that they would not back down from their historic position in favor of federal protection for snail darters and seals. According to a spokesperson for SAR, "These reports out of France change everything so far as we are concerned." She said that as long as it was thought that the fetus was genetically human, "we had no problem with favoring the rights of a full person over those of a merely potential person; but if abortion is the killing of animals, it amounts to speciesism."

A representative of the American Civil Liberties Union reached by telephone declined comment.

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# Feminism: Beyond the Second Stage

*Jessica Gress-Wright*

Barbara Bush finally got to speak at the Wellesley commencement last June, despite protests from 150 seniors that she did not embody the qualities that Wellesley seeks to instill in its students because she had dropped out of Smith to become a wife and mother. At about the same time, another Smithie from the forties spoke during Smith's own commencement weekend. Betty Friedan, the mother of American feminism, gave a rousing speech to a packed audience. She began by saying that "We have some real problems in feminism." She said that something was seriously wrong with feminism today, when a group of Wellesley seniors could repudiate Barbara Bush as their commencement speaker simply because she had chosen to be a full-time wife and mother. She reminded all of us in the audience that Barbara Bush hadn't really had any choice in the forties except to drop out of Smith to put George through law school. She described for us how she and other "first-stage" feminists fought to restore a fully legitimate place for women in the professions and in careers, a place they had won in the twenties and thirties but lost again as the post-war "feminine mystique" tightened its grip.

What Betty Friedan had really come to tell us, though, was something new and more important: that we have now entered the second stage of feminism. She let us know that it is now safe to acknowledge that the first-stage feminism of "having it all" and "Supermom" has been a cruel illusion. Women have been spared petty prejudice only to be met with personal catastrophe. For

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the first time in American history, women work far harder than their mothers. They miscarry more, are divorced more, abandoned more, abused more, fall into poverty more. And, if anything, their children, whom women stubbornly love and continue to bear despite all, have it even worse.

I was elated by her opening remarks. Our fifteenth-reunion class had just come from an extraordinary discussion among ourselves. The class of '75 had changed. There was no more of the uneasy, superficial "I just made VP for finance" posturing of our fifth and tenth reunions. This time we were honest. We told of stress miscarriages, premature births, and infertility, of alcoholism and divorce. Many of us had been beset by tragedy and disappointment, and in the process had radically re-evaluated our lives and values.

We quit dream jobs, refused partnerships, cut back to three days a week. We deliberately asked for tedious, dead-end work that got us home on time. We gave up the thousands of dollars and the years of hard work we had invested in our careers and "Ivy League" education. We willingly made the very sacrifices that so many feminists fought to free us from and condemned Barbara Bush for. We did it because we realized that children need families and mothers, not just "quality time" for a few carefully scheduled hours or "quality care" by a carefully regulated day-care center. We did it because we realized that we need our children. We are no longer ashamed to own the feminine in us, those personal, human, intimate values of hearth and home that we dutifully suppressed for so long in favor of careerism and competition.

But when she finally got to the heart of her talk, Betty Friedan did not suggest that the obstacles to combining a high-powered career and a young family were in any way profound or required the kind of radical re-evaluation our class had just completed a few minutes before. She did not defend the personhood of women and the importance of choice in the courageous way she did in her book *The Second Stage*, a work attacked by many feminists. Instead, she exhorted us to leap over the horns of the dilemma by vaulting to a very different sort of "second stage." This second stage informs us that we can indeed have it all, not because all good things in life can be had simultaneously (they cannot), nor because our newly enlightened husbands will leap into the domestic breach (which Friedan agrees they won't), but because the government will make our bosses give us unpaid maternity leave and subsidized day-care slots.

In this second stage, women's suffering is recognized, even tenderly cultivated—as political ammunition. But the solution propounded is neither personal empowerment nor spiritual wisdom. Instead, Betty Friedan and a loose coalition of professional feminists and child-care advocates proffer Smithies and other middle-class women a strategic bargain. If only we will give up our minds and our votes to the cause of the month, the bill of the month, if only we will shout how we are victims, too, then the advocates will promise us a place in the queue for public benefits. The elite will jostle with the poor and illiterate for subsidized day care, so strangers can care for the children we, privileged and poor alike, long to cradle in our own arms. Instead of fighting to give us the chance to nurture our children during the irretrievable, precious years of childhood, the activists promise laws to cudgel our bosses into giving us a few weeks of unpaid leave to guarantee that mere children will not needlessly interrupt our return to our jobs.

But these jobs seem to mean less and less, not just to the office cleaner but even to the elite of my class, the lawyers and vice presidents. A number of recent polls show that women want more time with their children. Huge majorities would like to be home with their small children if only they could afford it. True, many have to work. As a non-elite secretary, I myself worked to feed my family through two pregnancies that left me in such pain that I used to cling to the office walls for support. Yet quality, licensed day care did not alleviate my or my child's distress, it aggravated it, because the very professionalism and regulation by which legislation defines "quality" turned out to be structurally inimical to the flexibility and warmth mothers and children need. What we want and need and what 75 percent of American parents want and need is parental care or as close to parental care as they can come. The very day-care legislation that got so much applause for Friedan from the undergraduates and younger alumna at her talk favors the least popular, least flexible, and most expensive and problematic form of care: group care for young children.

In return for giving us not our first or second but last choice, our middle-class votes will guarantee this coalition irresistible political clout, clout the poor have never had. With that clout, the child-care lobby will, for the first time, be the channel for billions of dollars of public funds, with all the patronage potential that goes with it. As politics, this is business as usual. Everybody does it. The problem is truth in advertising. Child-care interest groups and their unthinking feminist allies use the rhetoric of "choice" and "quality" and their status as professional educators and guardians of young children to disguise as dispassionate advice what is in fact a political horsetrade. One for you, ten for me.

As Betty Friedan worked the crowd, milking cheers for the pending parental-leave and day-care legislation, I believe that neither she nor her audience recognized that by this act the movement has enmeshed itself in an unholy alliance. The same movement that promised us personhood, that promised us that we would never again suffer for the social and economic convenience of others, now campaigns assiduously, if unwittingly, to have us do just that.

This proposed legislation is the opening salvo in a deliberate attempt to "build a child-care system," a system openly modeled upon Swedish family policy.

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Some advocates, at least, are aware that the Swedish system was designed to drive women out of the home and to tap their labor. Swedish economists calculated how "wasteful" it was to allow women to inefficiently raise their own children when "coming manpower shortages" meant their labor could be put to much better use by society. Swedish social engineers declared that the family was a fundamental source of social inequality and determined to break its hold on children, shooing them into institutions and effectively regulating informal family day care, the care 75 percent of Swedish parents preferred, out of legal existence. They succeeded only too well. The birthrate plummeted to 30 percent below replacement and the Swedish family is the weakest in the world. In a desperate attempt to undo what they have wrought, government leaders now promise a full eighteen months of parental leave, thus attempting to save their society by smuggling through the back door what they so ruthlessly shoved out the front: mothers at home.

Today's America is fifteen years behind Sweden. So child-care advocates promise business leaders that a vote for their leave and child-care legislation will keep mothers in the work force so that looming labor shortages need never materialize. Betty Friedan herself reminded us of the increasing need for our labor, thoughtlessly repeating not just the child-care lobbyists' arguments but their very words. No need to add that wages will be bid down thereby. Business leaders can figure that out for themselves. The taxes to pay for subsidized slots will come from the same generation that needs them. The regulations involved will destroy the cheapest and most desired care, informal care in another family, as they did in Sweden, but with a new twist. Unlike Sweden, where a black market of family day care still exists, the fine print in current federal child-care legislation states that failure by any state to enforce licensing regulations will cause the guilty state to lose all its funding. Thus laws that supposedly give more money and greater choice in child care to mothers and their children will in fact hold them hostage to the enforced restriction of both.

Even though huge numbers of us are exhausted and isolated as our mothers never were, feminists, corporate leaders, and the child-care lobby are effectively forcing us to remain in the workforce against our deepest wishes, our lives made just bearable by scant leave and scanter subsidy. Many are probably sincere in their belief that, at bottom, women will be liberated only when they stand alone as economic equals in the outside world. But women are losing interest in this false, male, competitive model.

Women want children. Society has no future without them. Women with children who try to compete economically as individuals have the worst of both worlds and society pays the price. For the sake of all three, we need to strengthen, not supplant, the family. We need to have a women's movement with ideals, a movement that fights to give women the choice to recreate the irrational love and uneconomic nurturing that family implies. We need a women's movement that supports child benefits and family benefits, not child-care lobby benefits or industry benefits. We need the third stage.

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# Evolution as Dogma: The Establishment of Naturalism

***Phillip E. Johnson***

The orthodox explanation of what is wrong with creationism goes something like this:

> Science has accumulated overwhelming evidence for evolution. Although there are controversies among scientists regarding the precise mechanism of evolution, and Darwin's particular theory of natural selection may have to be modified or at least supplemented, there is no doubt whatsoever about the *fact* of evolution. All of today's living organisms including humans are the product of descent with modification from common ancestors, and ultimately in all likelihood from a single microorganism that itself evolved from nonliving chemicals. The only persons who reject the fact of evolution are biblical fundamentalists, who say that each species was separately created by God about 6,000 years ago, and that all the fossils are the products of Noah's Flood. The fundamentalists claim to be able to make a scientific case for their position, but "scientific creationism" is a contradiction in terms. Creation is inherently a religious doctrine, and there is no scientific evidence for it. This does not mean that science and religion are necessarily incompatible, because science limits itself to facts, hypotheses, and theories and does not intrude into questions of value, such as whether the universe or mankind has a purpose. Reasonable persons need have no fear that scientific *knowledge* conflicts with religious *belief*.

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Like many other official stories, the preceding description contains just enough truth to mislead persuasively. In fact, there is a great deal more to the creation-evolution controversy than meets the eye, or rather than meets the carefully cultivated media stereotype of "creationists" as Bible-quoting know-nothings who refuse to face up to the scientific evidence. The creationists may be wrong about many things, but they have at least one very important point to argue, a point that has been thoroughly obscured by all the attention paid to Noah's Flood and other side issues. What the science educators propose to teach as "evolution," and label as fact, is based not upon any incontrovertible empirical evidence, but upon a highly controversial philosophical presupposition. The controversy over evolution is therefore not going to go away as people become better educated on the subject. On the contrary, the more people learn about the philosophical content of what scientists are calling the "fact of evolution," the less they are going to like it.

To understand why this is so, we have to define the issue properly, which means that we will have to redefine some terms. Nobody doubts that evolution occurs, in the narrow sense that certain changes happen naturally. The most famous piece of evidence for Darwinism is a study of an English peppered-moth population consisting of both dark- and light-colored moths. When industrial smoke darkened the trees, the percentage of dark moths increased, due to their relative advantage in hiding from predators. When the air pollution was reduced, the trees became lighter and more light moths survived. Both colors were present throughout, and so no new characteristics emerged, but the percentage of dark moths in the population went up and down as changing conditions



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affected their relative ability to survive and produce offspring.

Examples of this kind allow Darwinists to assert as beyond question that "evolution is a fact," and that natural selection is an important directing force in evolution. If they mean only that evolution of a sort has been known to occur, and that natural selection has observable effects upon the distribution of characteristics in a population, then there really is nothing to dispute. The important claim of "evolution," however, is not that limited changes occur in populations due to differences in survival rates. It is that we can extrapolate from the very modest amount of evolution that can actually be observed to a grand theory that explains how moths, trees, and scientific observers came to exist in the first place.

Orthodox science insists that we can make the extrapolation. The "neo-Darwinian synthesis" (hereafter Darwinism) begins with the assumption that small random genetic changes (mutations) occasionally have positive survival value. Organisms possessing these favorable variations should have a relative advantage in survival and reproduction, and they will tend to pass their characteristics on to their descendants. By differential survival a favorable characteristic spreads through a population, and the population becomes different from what it was. If sufficient favorable mutations show up when and where they are needed, and if natural selection allows them to accumulate in a population, then it is conceivable that by tiny steps over vast amounts of time a bacterial ancestor might produce descendants as complex and varied as trees, moths, and human beings.

That is only a rough description of the theory, of course, and there are all sorts of arguments about the details. Some Darwinists, such as Harvard Professor Stephen Jay Gould, say that new mechanisms are about to be discovered that will produce a more complicated theory, in which strictly Darwinian selection of individual organisms will play a reduced role. There is also a continuing debate about whether it is necessary to "decouple macroevolution from microevolution." Some experts do not believe that major changes and the appearance of new forms (i.e., macroevolution) can be explained as the products of an accumulation of tiny mutations through natural selection of individual organisms (microevolution). If classical Darwinism isn't the explanation for macroevolution, however, there is only speculation as to what sort of alternative mechanisms might have been responsible. In science, as in other fields, you can't beat something with nothing, and so the Darwinist paradigm remains in place.

For all the controversies over these issues, however, there is a basic philosophical point on which the evolutionary biologists all agree. Some say new mechanisms have to be introduced and others say the old mechanisms are adequate, but nobody with a reputation to lose proposes to invoke a supernatural creator or a mystical "life force" to help out with the difficulties. The theory in question is a theory of *naturalistic* evolution, which means that it absolutely rules out any miraculous or supernatural intervention at any point. Everything is conclusively presumed to have happened through purely material mechanisms that are in principle accessible to scientific investigation, whether they have yet been discovered or not.

That there is a controversy over how macroevolution could have occurred is largely due to the increasing awareness in scientific circles that the fossil evidence is very difficult to reconcile with the Darwinist scenario. If all living species descended from common ancestors by an accumulation of tiny steps, then there once must have existed a veritable universe of transitional intermediate forms linking the vastly different organisms of today (e.g., moths, trees, and humans) with their hypothetical common ancestors. From Darwin's time to the present, paleontologists have hoped to find the ancestors and transitional intermediates and trace the course of macroevolution. Despite claims of success in some areas, however, the results have been on the whole disappointing. That the fossil record is in important respects hostile to a Darwinist interpretation has long been known to insiders as the "trade secret of paleontology," and the secret is now coming out in the open. New forms of life tend to be fully formed at their first appearance as fossils in the rocks. If these new forms actually evolved in gradual steps from pre-existing forms, as Darwinist science insists, the numerous intermediate forms that once must have existed have not been preserved.

To illustrate the fossil problem, here is what a particularly vigorous advocate of Darwinism, Oxford Zoology Professor (and popular author) Richard Dawkins, says in *The Blind Watchmaker* about the "Cambrian explosion," i.e., the apparently sudden appearance of the major animal forms at the beginning of the Cambrian era:

> The Cambrian strata of rocks, vintage about 600 million years, are the oldest ones in which we find most of the major invertebrate groups. And we find many of them in an advanced state of evolution, the very first time they appear. It is as though they were just planted there, without any evolutionary history. Needless to say, this appearance of sudden planting has delighted creationists. Evolutionists of all stripes believe, however, that this really does represent a very large gap in the fossil record, a gap that is simply due to the fact that, for some reason, very few fossils have lasted from periods before about 600 million years ago.

The "appearance of sudden planting" in this important instance is not exceptional. There is a

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general pattern in the fossil record of sudden appearance of new forms followed by "stasis" (i.e., absence of basic evolutionary change). The fossil evidence in Darwin's time was so discouraging to his theory that he ruefully conceded: "Nature may almost be said to have guarded against the frequent discovery of her transitional or linking forms." Leading contemporary paleontologists such as David Raup and Niles Eldredge say that the fossil problem is as serious now as it was then, despite the most determined efforts of scientists to find the missing links. This situation (along with other problems I am passing over) explains why many scientists would dearly love to confirm the existence of natural mechanisms that can produce basically new forms of life from earlier and simpler organisms without going through all the hypothetical intermediate steps that classical Darwinism requires.

Some readers may wonder why the scientists won't admit that there are mysteries beyond our comprehension, and that one of them may be how those complex animal groups could have evolved directly from preexisting bacteria and algae without leaving any evidence of the transition. The reason that such an admission is out of the question is that it would open the door to creationism, which in this context means not simply biblical fundamentalism, but *any* invocation of a creative intelligence or purpose outside the natural order. Scientists committed to philosophical naturalism do not claim to have found the precise answer to every problem, but they characteristically insist that they have the important problems sufficiently well in hand that they can narrow the field of possibilities to a set of naturalistic alternatives. Absent that insistence, they would have to concede that their commitment to naturalism is based upon faith rather than proof. Such a concession could be exploited by promoters of rival sources of knowledge, such as philosophy and religion, who would be quick to point out that faith in naturalism is no more "scientific" (i.e., empirically based) than any other kind of faith.

Immediately after the passage above about the Cambrian explosion, Dawkins adds the remark that, whatever their disagreements about the tempo and mechanism of evolution, scientific evolutionists all "despise" the creationists who take delight in pointing out the absence of fossil transitional intermediates. That word "despise" is well chosen. Darwinists do not regard creationists as sincere doubters but as dishonest propagandists, persons who probably only pretend to disbelieve what they must know in their hearts to be the truth of naturalistic evolution. The greater their apparent intelligence and education, the greater their fault in refusing to acknowledge the truth that is staring them in the face. These are "dark times," Dawkins noted last year in the *New York Times*, because nearly half of the American people, including many "who should know better," refuse to believe in evolution. That such people have any rational basis for their skepticism is out of the question, of course, and Dawkins tells us exactly what to think of them: "It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid, or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that)."

Darwinists disagree with creationists as a matter of definition, of course, but the degree of contempt that they express for creationism in principle requires some explanation beyond the fact that certain creationists have used unfair tactics such as quoting scientists out of context. It is not just the particular things that creationists do that infuriate the Darwinists; the creationists' very existence is infuriating. To understand why this is so, we must understand the powerful assumptions that mainstream scientists find it necessary to make, and the enormous frustration they feel when they are asked to take seriously persons who refuse to accept those assumptions.

What Darwinists like Dawkins despise as "creationism" is something much broader than biblical fundamentalism or even Christianity, and what they proclaim as "evolution" is something much narrower than what the word means in common usage. All persons who affirm that "God creates" are in an important sense creationists, even if they believe that the Genesis story is a myth and that God created gradually through evolution over billions of years. This follows from the fact that the theory of evolution in question is *naturalistic* evolution, meaning evolution that involves no intervention or guidance by a creator outside the world of nature.

Naturalistic evolution is consistent with the existence of "God" only if by that term we mean no more than a first cause which retires from further activity after establishing the laws of nature and setting the natural mechanism in motion. Persons who say they believe in evolution, but who have in mind a process guided by an *active* God who purposely intervenes or controls the process to accomplish some end, are using the same term that the Darwinists use, but they mean something very different by it. For example, here is what Douglas Futuyma, the author of a leading college evolutionary biology textbook, finds to be the most important conflict between the theory of evolution and what he thinks of as the "fundamentalist" perspective:

> Perhaps most importantly, if the world and its creatures developed purely by material, physical forces, it could not have been designed and has no purpose or goal. The fundamentalist, in contrast, believes that everything in the world, every species and every characteristic of every species, was designed by an intelligent, purposeful artificer, and that it was made for a purpose. Nowhere does this contrast apply with more force than to the human species. Some shrink from

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> the conclusion that the human species was not designed, has no purpose, and is the product of mere material mechanisms—but this seems to be the message of evolution. *(Science on Trial: The Case for Evolution)*

It is not only "fundamentalists," of course, but theists of any description who believe that an intelligent artificer made humanity for a purpose, whether through evolution or otherwise. Futuyma's doctrinaire naturalism is not just some superfluous philosophical addition to Darwinism that can be discarded without affecting the real "science" of the matter. If some powerful conscious being exists outside the natural order, it might use its power to intervene in nature to accomplish some purpose, such as the production of beings having consciousness and free will. If the possibility of an "outside" intervention is allowed in nature at any point, however, the whole naturalistic worldview quickly unravels.

Occasionally, a scientist discouraged by the consistent failure of theories purporting to explain some problem like the first appearance of life will suggest that perhaps supernatural creation is a tenable hypothesis in this one instance. Sophisticated naturalists instantly recoil with horror, because they know that there is no way to tell God when he has to stop. If God created the first organism, then how do we know he didn't do the same thing to produce all those animal groups that appear so suddenly in the Cambrian rocks? Given the existence of a designer ready and willing to do the work, why should we suppose that random mutations and natural selection are responsible for such marvels of engineering as the eye and the wing?

Because the claims of Darwinism are presented to the public as "science," most people are under the impression that they are supported by direct evidence such as experiments and fossil record studies. This impression is seriously misleading. Scientists cannot observe complex biological structures being created by random mutations and selection in a laboratory or elsewhere. The fossil record, as we have seen, is so unhelpful that the important steps in evolution must be assumed to have occurred within its "gaps." Darwinists believe that the mutation-selection mechanism accomplishes wonders of creativity not because the wonders can be demonstrated, but because they cannot think of a more plausible explanation for the existence of wonders that does not involve an unacceptable *creator*, i.e., a being or force outside the world of nature. According to Gareth Nelson, "evidence, or proof, of origins—of the universe, of life, of all the major groups of life, of all the minor groups of life, indeed of all the species—is weak or nonexistent when measured on an absolute scale." Nelson, a senior zoologist at the American Museum of Natural History, wrote that statement in the preface to a recent book by Wendell Bird, the leading attorney for the creationist organizations. Nelson himself is no creationist, but he is sufficiently disgusted with Darwinist dogmatism that he looks benignly upon unorthodox challengers.

Philosophical naturalism is so deeply ingrained in the thinking of many educated people today, including theologians, that they find it difficult even to imagine any other way of looking at things. To such people, Darwinism seems so logically appealing that only a modest amount of confirming evidence is needed to prove the whole system, and so they point to the peppered-moth example as virtually conclusive. Even if they do develop doubts about whether such modest forces can account for large-scale change, their naturalism is undisturbed. Since there is nothing outside of nature, and since *something* must have produced all the kinds of organisms that exist, a satisfactory naturalistic mechanism must be waiting to be discovered.

The same situation looks quite different to people who accept the possibility of a creator outside the natural order. To such people, the peppered-moth observations and similar evidence seem absurdly inadequate to prove that natural selection can make a wing, an eye, or a brain. From their more skeptical perspective, the consistent pattern in the fossil record of sudden appearance followed by stasis tends to prove that there is something wrong with Darwinism, not that there is something wrong with the fossil record. The absence of proof "when measured on an absolute scale" is unimportant to a thoroughgoing naturalist, who feels that science is doing well enough if it has a plausible explanation that maintains the naturalistic worldview. The same absence of proof is highly significant to any person who thinks it possible that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in naturalistic philosophy.

Victory in the creation-evolution dispute therefore belongs to the party with the cultural authority to establish the ground rules that govern the discourse. If creation is admitted as a serious possibility, Darwinism cannot win, and if it is excluded *a priori* Darwinism cannot lose. The point is illustrated by the logic which the Natural Academy of Sciences employed to persuade the Supreme Court that "creation-scientists" should not be given an opportunity to present their case against the theory of evolution in science classes. Creation-Science is not science, said the Academy, because

> it fails to display the most basic characteristic of science: reliance upon naturalistic explanations. Instead, proponents of "creation-science" hold that the creation of the universe, the earth, living things, and man was accomplished through supernatural means inaccessible to human understanding.

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Besides, the Academy's brief continued, creationists do not perform scientific research to establish the mechanism of supernatural creation, that being by definition impossible. Instead, they seek to discredit the scientific theory of evolution by amassing evidence that is allegedly consistent with the relatively recent, abrupt appearance of the universe, the earth, living things, and man in substantially the same form as they now have.

> "Creation-science" is thus manifestly a device designed to dilute the persuasiveness of the theory of evolution. The dualistic mode of analysis and the negative argumentation employed to accomplish this dilution is, moreover, antithetical to the scientific method.

The Academy's brief went on to cite evidence for evolution, but evidence was unnecessary. Creationists are disqualified from making a positive case, because science by definition is based upon naturalism. The rules of science also disqualify any purely negative argumentation designed to dilute the persuasiveness of the theory of evolution. Creationism is thus out of court—and out of the classroom—before any consideration of evidence. Put yourself in the place of a creationist who has been silenced by that logic, and you may feel like a criminal defendant who has just been told that the law does not recognize so absurd a concept as "innocence."

With creationist explanations disqualified at the outset, it follows that the evidence will always support the naturalistic alternative. We can be absolutely certain that the Academy will not say, "The evidence on the whole supports the theory of evolution, although we concede that the apparent abrupt appearance of many fully formed animal groups in the Cambrian rocks is in itself a point in favor of the creationists." There are *no* scientific points in favor of creation and there never will be any as long as naturalists control the definition of science, because creationist explanations by definition violate the fundamental commitment of science to naturalism. When the fossil record does not provide the evidence that naturalism would like to see, it is the fossil record, and not the naturalistic explanation, that is judged to be inadequate.

When pressed about the unfairness of disqualifying their opponents *a priori*, naturalists sometimes portray themselves as merely insisting upon a proper definition of "science," and not as making any absolute claims about "truth." By this interpretation, the National Academy of Sciences did not say that it is *untrue* that "the creation of the universe, the earth, living things, and man was accomplished through supernatural means inaccessible to human understanding," but only that this statement is *unscientific*. Scientific naturalists who take this line sometimes add that they do not necessarily object to the study of creationism in the public schools, provided it occurs in literature and social science classes rather than in science class.

This naturalist version of balanced treatment is not a genuine attempt at a fair accommodation of competing worldviews, but a rhetorical maneuver. It enables naturalists effectively to label their own product as fact and its rival as fantasy, without having to back up the decision with evidence. The dominant culture assumes that science provides *knowledge*, and so in natural science classes fundamental propositions can be proclaimed as objectively true, regardless of how many dissenters believe them to be false. That is the powerful philosophical meaning of the claim that "evolution is a fact." By contrast, in literature class we read poetry and fiction, and in social science we study the subjective *beliefs* of various cultures from a naturalistic perspective. If you have difficulty seeing just how loaded this knowledge-belief distinction is, try to imagine the reaction of Darwinists to the suggestion that their theory should be removed from the college biology curriculum and studied instead in a course devoted to nineteenth-century intellectual history.

By skillful manipulation of categories and definitions, the Darwinists have established philosophical naturalism as educational orthodoxy in a nation in which the overwhelming majority of people express some form of theistic belief inconsistent with naturalism. According to a 1982 Gallup poll aimed at measuring nationwide opinion, 44 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that "God created man pretty much in his present form at one time within the last 10,000 years." That would seem to mark those respondents as creationists in a relatively narrow sense. Another 38 percent accepted evolution as a process guided by God. Only 9 percent identified themselves as believers in a naturalistic evolutionary process not guided by God. The philosophy of the 9 percent is now to be taught in the schools as unchallengeable truth.

Cornell University Professor William Provine, a leading historian of Darwinism, concluded from Gallup's figures that the American public simply does not understand what the scientists mean by evolution. As Provine summarized the matter, "The destructive implications of evolutionary biology extend far beyond the assumptions of organized religion to a much deeper and more pervasive belief, held by the vast majority of people, that non-mechanistic organizing designs or forces are somehow responsible for the visible order of the physical universe, biological organisms, and human moral order." Provine blamed the scientific establishment itself for misleading the public about the absolute incompatibility of contemporary Darwinism with any belief in God, designing forces, or absolute standards of good and evil. Scientific leaders have obscured the conflict for fear of jeopardizing

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public support for their funding, and also because some of them believe that religion may still play a useful role in maintaining public morality. According to Provine, "These rationalizations are politic but intellectually dishonest."

The organizations that speak officially for science continue to deny that there is a conflict between Darwinism and "religion." This denial is another example of the skillful manipulation of definitions, because there are evolution-based religions that embrace naturalism with enthusiasm. Stephen Jay Gould holds up the geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky, "the greatest evolutionist of our century and a lifelong Russian Orthodox," as proof that evolution and religion are compatible. The example is instructive, because Dobzhansky made a religion out of evolution. According to a eulogy by Francisco Ayala, "Dobzhansky was a religious man, although he apparently rejected fundamental beliefs of traditional religion, such as the existence of God and of life beyond physical death. His religiosity was grounded on the conviction that there is meaning in the universe. He saw that meaning in the fact that evolution has produced the stupendous diversity of the living world and has progressed from primitive forms of life to mankind. . . . He believed that somehow mankind would eventually evolve into higher levels of harmony and creativity." In short, Dobzhansky was what we would today call a New Age pantheist. Of course evolution is not incompatible with religion when the religion is evolution.

Dobzhansky was one of the principal founders of the neo-Darwinian synthesis. Another was Julian Huxley, who promoted a religion of "evolutionary humanism." A third was the paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson. Simpson explained in his book *The Meaning of Evolution* that "there are some beliefs still current, labeled as religious and involved with religious emotions, that conflict with evolution and are therefore intellectually untenable in spite of their emotional appeal." Simpson added that it is nonetheless "self-evident . . . that evolution and *true* religion are compatible." By true religion he meant naturalistic religion, which accepts that "man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind." Because efforts have been made to obscure the point, it should be emphasized that Simpson's view is not some personal opinion extraneous to the real "science" of Darwinism. It is an expression of the same naturalism that gives Darwinists confidence that mutation and natural selection, Darwinism's "blind watchmaker," can do all the work of a creator.

Against this background readers may perceive the cruel irony in Justice Brennan's opinion for the Supreme Court majority, holding the Louisiana "balanced treatment" statute unconstitutional because the creationists who promoted it had a "religious purpose." Of course they had a religious purpose, if by that we mean a purpose to try to do something to counter the highly successful efforts of proponents of naturalism to have their philosophy established in the public schools as "fact." If creationists object to naturalistic evolution on religious grounds, they are admonished that it is inappropriate for religion to meddle with science. If they try to state scientific objections, they are disqualified instantly by definitions devised for that purpose by their adversaries. Sisyphus himself, eternally rolling his stone up that hill in Hades, must pity their frustration.

The Darwinists are also frustrated, however, because they find the resurgence of creationism baffling. Why can't these people learn that the evidence for evolution is overwhelming? Why do they persist in denying the obvious? Above all, how can they be so dishonest as to claim that scientific evidence supports their absurd position? Writing the introduction to a collection of polemics titled *Scientists Confront Creationism*, Richard Lewontin attempted to explain why creationism is doomed by its very nature. Because he is a dedicated Marxist as well as a famous geneticist, Lewontin saw the conflict between creation and evolution as a class struggle, with history inevitably awarding the victory to the naturalistic class. The triumph of evolution in the schools in the post-Sputnik era signaled that "the culture of the dominant class had triumphed, and traditional religious values, the only vestige of control that rural people had over their own lives and the lives of their families, had been taken from them." In fact, many creationists are urban professionals who make their living from technology, but Lewontin's basic point is valid. The "fact of evolution" is an instrument of cultural domination, and it is only to be expected that people who are being consigned to the dustbin of history should make some protest.

Lewontin was satisfied that creationism cannot survive because its acceptance of miracles puts it at odds with the more rational perception of the world as a place where all events have natural causes. Even a creationist "crosses seas not on foot but in machines, finds the pitcher empty when he has poured out its contents, and the cupboard bare when he has eaten the last of the loaf." Lewontin thus saw creationism as falsified not so much by any discoveries of modern science as by universal human experience, a thesis that does little to explain either why so absurd a notion has attracted so many adherents or why we should expect it to lose ground in the near future.

Once again we see how the power to define can be used to distort, especially when the critical definition is implicit rather than exposed to view. (I remind the reader that to Lewontin and myself, a "creationist" is not necessarily a biblical literalist, but rather any person who believes that God creates.) If creationists really were people who live in an imaginary world of continual miracles, there would be very few of them. On the contrary, from a creationist point

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of view, the very fact that the universe is on the whole orderly, in a manner comprehensible to our intellect, is evidence that we and it were fashioned by a common intelligence. What is truly a miracle, in the pejorative sense of an event having no rational connection with what has gone before, is the emergence of a being with consciousness, free will, and a capacity to understand the laws of nature in a universe which in the beginning contained only matter in mindless motion.

Once we understand that biologists like Lewontin are employing their scientific prestige in support of a philosophical platform, there is no longer any reason to be intimidated by their claims to scientific expertise. On the contrary, the inability of most biologists to make any sense out of creationist criticisms of their presuppositions is evidence of their own philosophical naiveté. The "overwhelming evidence for naturalistic evolution" no longer overwhelms when the naturalistic worldview is itself called into question, and that worldview is as problematical as any other set of metaphysical assumptions when it is placed on the table for examination rather than being taken for granted as "the way we think today."

The problem with scientific naturalism as a worldview is that it takes a sound methodological premise of natural science and transforms it into a dogmatic statement about the nature of the universe. Science is committed by definition to empiricism, by which I mean that scientists seek to find truth by observation, experiment, and calculation rather than by studying sacred books or achieving mystical states of mind. It may well be, however, that there are certain questions—important questions, ones to which we desperately want to know the answers—that cannot be answered by the methods available to our science. These may include not only broad philosophical issues such as whether the universe has a purpose, but also questions we have become accustomed to think of as empirical, such as how life first began or how complex biological systems were put together.

Suppose, however, that some people find it intolerable either to be without answers to these questions or to allow the answers to come from anyone but scientists. In that case science must provide answers, but to do this, it must invoke *scientism*, a philosophical doctrine which asserts arbitrarily that knowledge comes only through the methods of investigation available to the natural sciences. The Soviet Cosmonaut who announced upon landing that he had been to the heavens and had not seen God was expressing crudely the basic philosophical premise that underlies Darwinism. Because we cannot examine God in our telescopes or under our microscopes, God is unreal. It is meaningless to say that some entity exists if in principle we can never have knowledge of that entity.

With the methodology of scientism in mind, we can understand what it means to contrast scientific "knowledge" with religious "belief," and what follows from the premise that natural science is not suitable for investigating whether the universe has a purpose. Belief is inherently subjective, and includes elements such as fantasy and preference. Knowledge is in principle objective, and includes elements such as facts and laws. If science does not investigate the purpose of the universe, then the universe effectively has no purpose, because a purpose of which we can have no knowledge is meaningless to us. On the other hand, the universe does exist, and all its features must be explicable in terms of forces and causes accessible to scientific investigation. It follows that the best naturalistic explanation available is effectively true, with the proviso that it may eventually be supplanted by a better or more inclusive theory. Thus naturalistic evolution is a fact, and the fact implies a critical guiding role for natural selection.

Scientism itself is not a fact, however, nor is it attractive as a philosophy once its elements and consequences are made explicit. Persons who want naturalistic evolution to be accepted as unquestioned fact must therefore use their cultural authority to enact rules of discourse that protect the purported fact from the attacks of unbelievers. First, they can identify science with naturalism, which means that they insist as a matter of first principle that no consideration whatever be given to the possibility that mind or spirit preceded matter. Second, they can impose a rule of procedure that disqualifies purely negative argument, so that a theory which obtains some very modest degree of empirical support can become immune to disproof until and unless it is supplanted by a better naturalistic theory. With these rules in place, Darwinists can claim to have proved that natural selection crafted moths, trees, and people, and point to the peppered-moth observation as proof.

The assumption of naturalism is in the realm of speculative philosophy, and the rule against negative argument is arbitrary. It is as if a judge were to tell a defendant that he may not establish his innocence unless he can produce a suitable substitute to be charged with the crime. Such vulnerable rules of discourse need protection from criticism, and two distinct rhetorical strategies have been pursued to provide it. First, we have already seen that the direct conflict between Darwinism and theism has been blurred, so that theists who are not committed to biblical inerrancy are led to believe that they have no reason to be suspicious of Darwinism. The remaining objectors can be marginalized as fundamentalists, whose purportedly scientific objections need not be taken seriously because "everybody knows" that people like that will believe, and say, anything.

The second strategy is to take advantage of the prestige that science enjoys in an age of technology, by asserting that anyone who disputes Darwinism must be an enemy of science, and hence of rationality itself.

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This argument gains a certain plausibility from the fact that Darwinism is not the only area within the vast realm of science where such practices as extravagant extrapolation, arbitrary assumptions, and metaphysical speculation have been tolerated. The history of scientific efforts to explain human behavior provides many examples, and some aspects of cosmology, such as its Anthropic Principle, invite the label "cosmo-theology." What makes the strategy effective, however, is not the association of Darwinism with the more speculative aspects of cosmology, but its purported link with technology. Donald Johanson put the point effectively, if crudely: "You can't accept one part of science because it brings you good things like electricity and penicillin and throw away another part because it brings you some things you don't like about the origin of life."

But why can't you do exactly that? That scientists can learn a good deal about the behavior of electrons and bacteria does not prove that they know how electrons or bacteria came into existence in the first place. It is also possible that contemporary scientists are insightful upon some matters and, like their predecessors, thoroughly confused about others. Twentieth-century experience demonstrates that scientific technology can work wonders, of course. It also demonstrates that dubious doctrines based upon philosophy can achieve an undeserved respectability by cloaking themselves in the mystique of science. Whether Darwinism is another example of pseudo-science is the question, and this question cannot be answered by a vague appeal to the authority of science.

For now, things are going well for Darwinism in America. The Supreme Court has dealt the creationists a crushing blow, and state boards of education are beginning to adopt "science frameworks." These policy statements are designed to encourage textbook publishers to proclaim boldly the fact of evolution—and therefore the naturalistic philosophy that underlies the fact—instead of minimizing the subject to avoid controversy. Efforts are also under way to bring under control any individual teachers who express creationist sentiments in the classroom, especially if they make use of unapproved materials. As ideological authority collapses in other parts of the world, the Darwinists are successfully swimming against the current.

There will be harder times ahead, however. The Darwinist strategy depends upon a certain blurring of the issues, and in particular upon maintaining the fiction that what is being promoted is an inoffensive "fact of evolution," which is opposed only by a discredited minority of religious fanatics. As the Darwinists move out to convert the nation's schoolchildren to a naturalistic outlook, it may become more and more difficult to conceal the religious implications of their system. Plenty of people within the Darwinist camp know what is being concealed, and cannot be relied upon to maintain a discreet silence. William Provine, for example, has been on a crusade to persuade the public that it has to discard either Darwinism or God, and not only God but also such non-materialistic concepts as free will and objective standards of morality. Provine offers this choice in the serene confidence that the biologists have enough evidence to persuade the public to choose Darwinism, and to accept its philosophical consequences.

The establishment of naturalism in the schools is supposedly essential to the improvement of science education, which is in such a dismal state in America that national leaders are truly worried. It is not likely, however, that science education can be improved in the long run by identifying science with a worldview abhorred by a large section of the population, and then hoping that the public never finds out what is being implied. The project requires that the scientific establishment commit itself to a strategy of indoctrination, in which the teachers first tell students what they are supposed to believe and then inform them about any difficulties only later, when it is deemed safe to do so. The weakness that requires such dogmatism is evident in Philip Kitcher's explanation of why it is "insidious" to propose that the creationists be allowed to present their negative case in the classroom:

> There will be . . . much dredging up of misguided objections to evolutionary theory. The objections are spurious—but how is the teacher to reveal their errors to students who are at the beginning of their science studies? . . . What Creationists really propose is a situation in which people without scientific training—fourteen-year-old students, for example—are asked to decide a complex issue on partial evidence.

A few centuries ago, the defenders of orthodoxy used the same logic to explain why the common people needed to be protected from exposure to the spurious heresies of Galileo. In fairness, the creationists Kitcher had in mind are biblical fundamentalists who want to attack orthodox scientific doctrine on a broad front. I do not myself think that such advocacy groups should be given a platform in the classroom. In my experience, however, Darwinists apply the same contemptuous dismissal to any suggestion, however well-informed and modestly stated, that in constructing their huge *theoretical edifice upon a blind commitment to* naturalism, they may have been building upon the sand. As long as the media and the courts are quiescent, they may retain the power to marginalize dissent and establish their philosophy as orthodoxy. What they do not have the power to do is to make it true. FT

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# Responses to Phillip Johnson

## William B. Provine

An appropriate subtitle for Phillip Johnson's article would be, *Why my fear and loathing of evolution prevent me from believing it is true despite the overwhelming evidence for it.*

Evolution produces two results that cry out for explanation: adaptation and diversity. Sonar in bats, eyesight in eagles, sunlight energy capture in plants, and adaptations in general had only one kind of explanation before Darwin: the argument from design. The same argument explained the vast diversity of kinds of animals and plants. The greatest minds in the history of Western Civilization, from Plato and Aristotle to Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, and Boyle, all believed that the argument from design was the only reasonable explanation for adaptations in animals and plants. When they were alive, they were right.

As a young man, Charles Darwin was a creationist deeply impressed with William Paley's version of the argument from design. But after returning from the voyage of H.M.S. *Beagle*, reconsideration of what he had seen on the voyage convinced him that evolution had occurred. A short time later, when he deduced the theory of natural selection to explain the adaptations in which he had previously seen the handiwork of God, Darwin knew that he was committing cultural murder. He understood immediately that if natural selection explained adaptations, and evolution by descent were true, then the argument from design was dead and all that went with it, namely the existence of a personal god, free will, life after death, immutable moral laws, and ultimate meaning in life. The immediate reactions to Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* exhibit, in addition to favorable and admiring responses from a relatively few scientists, an understandable fear and disgust that has never disappeared from Western culture.

Johnson has excellent reasons for fearing and despising modern scientific conceptions of the evolutionary process. He clearly wants animals and plants (humans in particular—he says nothing about disgusting parasites) to have been designed by divine purpose. He wants to have free will and divinely inspired moral laws that last forever unchanged, and I suspect that he wants to have some kind of ultimate meaning in life coupled with life after death. If modern evolutionary biology is true, then all these lofty desires are hopeless.

In this article Johnson provides what he calls a "rough description" of modern evolutionary biology, raises a series of arguments against evolution, and finally proposes a creationist view of the origin of species. I will address each in turn.

Johnson's "rough description" of what he calls Darwinism is actually a crude caricature. He gives only one example of evolution of any kind, a change in gene frequencies in a locus controlling melanism in the peppered-moth *Biston betularia*, and argues that this is "the most famous piece of evidence for Darwinism" and that "examples of this kind allow Darwinists to assert as beyond question that 'evolution is a fact.'"

No evolutionary biologist would assert that the case of industrial melanism is the best evidence that evolution by descent is true. Darwin knew nothing of Mendelian heredity of industrial melanism, but he had three very powerful arguments and sets of evidence for evolution sufficient to convince himself and, by the end of his life, a great number of others who were initially skeptical. First, Darwin says that the unmistakable similarity of fossil species to living species in any one district (living species were clearly different from the fossil species, yet also clearly related) strongly suggested evolution by descent. Second, going around the coast of South America, Darwin observed that the same ecological niche was occupied by similar but clearly different species. And third, he noticed that despite deep similarity of physical features in the Galapagos and Cape Verde Islands, the Galapagos Islands were filled with species different from but related to those on the west coast of South America, whereas the Cape Verde Islands were filled with species different from but related to those on the west coast of Africa. Evolution by descent from mainland species was a compelling hypothesis.

Modern biogeography combined with plate tectonics demonstrates dramatically the relatedness of species that originated in the same area but later spread on continental plates to different places on the earth's surface. Most creationists avoid the evidence from biogeography because construction of elaborate and implausible myths is required to explain it away.

From modern molecular biology comes additional evidence for evolution by descent. DNA sequence data shows that closely related but biologically wholly isolated species share a huge proportion of their DNA, often more than 99 percent (humans and chimpanzees share about 99 percent of their genomes). This measurement of relatedness is strong evidence of shared descent, especially because many of the DNA sequences are junk that codes for nothing, but are still shared because of common descent.

Yet Johnson totally ignores all this evidence for evolution, arguing instead that he has adequately covered the evidence by mentioning and ridiculing the case of industrial melanism. Johnson's presentation of evidence for evolution is a sham. Only an uncritical or uninformed editorial process could allow this sham to be published.

Now to his critique of evolution. Evolution, he says, is based upon a "highly controversial philosophical presupposition," naturalism, which holds that natural phenomena have natural explanations, not supernatural explanations. "Faith in naturalism," he claims, "is no more 'scientific' (i.e., empirically based) than any other kind of faith." The only reason why naturalistic explanations of the origins of humans



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dominate the science classes of high schools and colleges is because of the "cultural authority" of scientists, and their "skillful manipulation of categories and definitions."

The reason that naturalism is preferred by scientists is because it works. Many phenomena thought in earlier times to have no natural explanation have indeed been explained by natural science. Examples from biology include heredity, viral diseases, and adaptations.

Johnson is wrong that all leaps of faith are somehow equal, a favorite assertion of creationists. I have faith that the sun will rise tomorrow morning and the day will become light at dawn. This is a naturalistic faith based upon many lifetimes of observation. This leap of faith is much smaller than the leap of faith required to believe that some unobserved god laid known immutable moral rules for humans it designed. In Newton's time it was a lesser leap of faith to believe that adaptations were produced by purposive forces of some kind, but now the lesser leap is to believe that natural selection produces adaptations.

There is no evidence against evolution in Johnson's essay. He claims that the fossil evidence is very difficult to reconcile with evolution, or that the fossil record is hostile to Darwinism. This tired assertion is based only upon the gaps in the fossil record. Evolutionists have two convincing lines of counterevidence. The first is that fossils are formed only under a small set of very special circumstances, and that fossils formed are often obliterated by a variety of well-verified mechanisms, including subduction of continental plates under the earth's crust, the fate of most pre-Cambrian fossils. Second, we have no reason to think, as Johnson asserts, that intermediate forms should be found everywhere in the fossil record. A new species generally becomes distinct in a relatively small area, then perhaps spreads widely. The chances of finding the transitional forms in the fossil record are extremely small. A great many books have been written by evolutionists to show that the fossil record is not hostile to evolution. Only this year, fossil ancestors of whales having small but functioning legs have been uncovered, thus bridging one of the most notorious gaps in the fossil record.

I waited expectantly for Johnson's positive evidence for supernatural intervention in the origin of species, knowing that it would be some version of the argument from design. Sure enough: "From a creationist point of view, the very fact that the universe is on the whole orderly, in a manner comprehensive to our intellect, is evidence that we and it were fashioned by a common intelligence." No, that the universe has order is not evidence that it was fashioned by Johnson's god. Naturalistic explanations have already been successful enough in explaining natural order to conclude with assurance that the argument from design simply does not carry much weight any more. That is why most theologians have given it up. One wonders why Johnson trots it out again in such simple and uncritical form as his only positive argument for purposive origin of species, as if merely stating it was reason enough to take the argument seriously. Natural selection is a far better explanation for adaptations than purposive forces, especially considering that the better adapted a species is to its environment, the more certain becomes its extinction should the environment change (or in other words, natural selection is blind to the future).

I agree with Johnson on one major issue. We both think the evidence is good that prominent evolutionists have joined with equally prominent theologians and religious leaders to sweep under the rug the incompatibilities of evolution and religion, and we both deplore this strategy.

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## Gareth Nelson

I agree with Phillip Johnson that the creation/evolution controversy is complex. I agree with many of his specific points. In reading of his concern that evolution "is based not upon any incontrovertible empirical evidence, but upon a highly controversial philosophical presupposition," I am reminded of events in Paris that transpired in the early part of 1751, after publication of volume one of Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*, which contained his *Theory of the Earth*. The Deputies and Syndic of the Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne wrote to Buffon in order that he respond satisfactorily to their findings—that certain propositions in his book "contain principles and maxims that do not conform with those of the Religion." Buffon's response, which was "accepted and approved" at the general assembly of the Faculty, April 1, 1751, was in the form of a declaration, which he began thus:

> I declare that I had no intention to contradict the text of Scripture; that I believe very firmly everything there reported on the creation, be it the temporal order, be it the circumstances of the facts; and that I abandon that which in my book concerns the formation of the earth, and in general everything that might be contrary to the narrative of Moses, having presented my hypothesis on the formation of planets only as a purely philosophical supposition.

In this instance, the Sorbonne Faculty "accepted and

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approved" scientific knowledge, even knowledge contrary to Scripture, for it was but "philosophical supposition." Johnson's contrast is different: his is not supposition vs. Scripture, but supposition vs. incontrovertible evidence.

My problem is that all facts, so far as I know, are capable of alternative interpretation. Facts, or evidence, seem incontrovertible only in the light, or dark as the case may be, of human judgment, which is the only source of error on this planet. In my experience, error is most severe in relation to fact judged incontrovertible. Johnson's contrast, then, seems meaningless except in terms consistent with the action of the Sorbonne Deputies. Only historical circumstance and use of language differentiate "Scripture" and "incontrovertible evidence."

Lack of a defined standard of faith disquiets human souls. Among them is the evolutionist who makes of his "science" a religion, as Johnson rightly perceives. Such an evolutionist is as justified in his disquiet today, I suppose, as were the Sorbonne Deputies some 240 years ago. This equivalence seems the basis of Johnson's concern, as if the evolutionist were today's censorial deputy—as if the science classroom of today were the equivalent of the theological classroom of the past and the boot of authority were now on the other foot.

There is a difference between then and now, in society if not in basic human motivation. No evolutionist of today, at least in the United States, has any legal authority to intimidate other persons who might publicly disagree. Creationists might feel that their children are persecuted by "naturalism in the schools." Yet an overzealous evolutionist has no legal power to force anyone publicly to avow that his beliefs are mere "philosophical supposition." The evolutionist enjoys similar protection under the law. What is supposition and what is truth are matters for human, not legal, judgment.

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## Irving Kristol

I find myself very sympathetic to Phillip Johnson's critique of Darwinism, neo-Darwinism, and other "naturalistic" theories of evolution. On the other hand, I find myself out of sympathy with his cryptic references to "creationism" as an alternative to these theories.

The efforts of biologists, paleontologists, etc. to come up with a "naturalist" theory of evolution that will fit the facts embedded in the historical record has by now an air of desperation. Environmental changes seem clearly inadequate to explain the origin of species, and so do theories based on genetic mutation. If there is a "natural" mechanism at work—using "natural" to mean "causal" in strictly scientific terms—we have not yet discovered it. Indeed, we are no closer to such an explanation today than when Darwin wrote his *Origin of Species*—a great work in scientific biology but one that tells us nothing credible about how species originate.

So it is objectionable that in our schools the origin of species (as distinct from intra-species evolution) is taught dogmatically as a "fact" that Darwin and modern geneticists have firmly established beyond dispute. Scientific integrity would seem to require that the origin of species be taught as an intriguing puzzle, to which we do not as yet have a scientific answer. We do this with cosmogony and cosmology—the best teachers, at least, do it—and we seem not to be the worse for it. It has always been in the finest traditions of scientific inquiry to emphasize how our increasing knowledge of natural processes always reveals new limits to what we do know.

Why don't we approach the origin of species in the same spirit? The answer is a fear of encouraging "creationism" as a pseudo-scientific alternative explanation. Biologists are still very much engaged in the warfare between science and theology, largely because theologians cannot, in good conscience, declare an armistice. None of the "naturalistic" theories of the origin of the universe is radically subversive of the biblical doctrine of creation, since science cannot pretend to know the origin of origins (e.g., what came before the "Big Bang"?). But a purely "naturalistic" theory of *life* and of *human* origins and of the evolution of animate species is another matter entirely. It reduces humanity to nothing more than a highly complex organism with the odd capability of imagining itself as having a soul. The implications for morality, and not just theology, are enormous. Such a view of humanity is utterly incompatible with any religion and is a standing invitation to nihilism.

It remains to be said, however, that what passes for "creationism" today is in truth a pseudo-scientific doctrine and has no place in scientific instruction. The Bible "tells a story" of human origins in the language of myth, not science, and the power of this "story" derives from the way it strikes a chord in our unique humanity, enlightens us about our unique human status. Animals do not tell each other such a story—only humans do. Nor have humans ever existed who were not in possession of such a story. So one can say that it is "natural" for human beings to "believe" this story—only it is not a scientific belief. Its truth was (and is) supra-literal, transcendental and not scientific.

It is worth noting, too, that scientific "naturalism" and "creationism" do not exhaust the possibilities of explanation. Any "teleological" explanation, in purely philosophical terms, that sees the origin of

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species as an inevitable movement from "lower" to "higher" can be made to fit the facts very plausibly. Such explanations are irreconcilable with scientific "naturalism" which rejects teleology, but can be made to fit rather neatly into a religious view, which would then posit a claim to being able to explain the source of this teleological dynamic. There are some quite distinguished German and French "phenomenological biologists" who think along these teleological lines, and they ought to receive some attention.

In short, I think our goal should be to have biology and evolution taught in a way that points to what we don't know as well as what we do. That is enough. "Creationism," in the sense of literal biblical faith, has no place in scientific instruction.

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## Thomas H. Jukes

The "first things" needed by an author are some acquaintance with the matters to be discussed. Phillip Johnson displays very little knowledge of either creationism or evolution. Johnson's approach is one used by creationists in debate: make so many misstatements in one minute that it will take half an hour of rebuttal to deal with them. I have space to mention only a few of his.

Early on, he recites the familiar creationist non-argument that Darwinist science insists that "the numerous intermediate forms that once must have existed have not been preserved," which Johnson alleges is "the trade secret of paleontology." But no sciences have "trade secrets." Plenty of fossils of intermediate forms have been found. Intermediate forms are also studied today by molecular evolution, which shows that *all* organisms may be "intermediate forms." Johnson further says that "scientists won't admit there are mysteries beyond our comprehension"—itself an incorrect charge—and that "one of them may be how those complex animal groups could have evolved directly from pre-existing bacteria and algae without leaving any evidence of the transition." There is no such "direct" evolution: animals, bacteria, and algae have a common ancestor from which they have diverged, as can be shown by aligning and comparing amino acid sequences of proteins and nucleotide sequences of homologous ribosomal RNA molecules that are found in both bacteria and vertebrates. Unambiguous similarities in these sequences show descent from a common origin.

Johnson says that creationists do things that "infuriate the Darwinists," but nowhere does he tell us what these things are. Evolutionists don't worry about astrologers or the Flat Earth Society; such groups do not harass school teachers and intimidate publishers of school science textbooks. In contrast, a leading creationist demanded that the State of California withhold funds from the San Diego School District because of use of an "illegal [!] book" (shades of totalitarianism), *Biology* by Helena Curtis. Creationists, through years of intellectual and economic terrorism, have forced the removal of evolution as a topic from school science textbooks, even to the point where the word "evolution" is often excluded from indexes.

Johnson notes that in a Gallup poll, 44 percent of respondents agree that "God created man pretty much in his present form at one time within the last 10,000 years." He contrasts this 44 percent with the mere 9 percent who believe in a "naturalistic evolutionary process not guided by God," and goes on to say that "the philosophy [sic] of the 9 percent is now to be taught in the schools as unchallengeable truth" (again, incorrect—science is not presented as unchallengeable truth). Johnson says that "philosophical naturalism," by which he means conventional science, has been imposed on this nation "by skillful manipulation of categories and definitions." (Such manipulation sounds more like the tortuous procedures of the legal profession than the open forum of science.) So he wants scientific education to be decided by popular vote. Bring on the flying saucers, astrology, and extrasensory perception. How sad that a professor of law should argue on behalf of a degradation of the intellect.

Johnson shows his pro-creationist prejudice when he says that the book *Scientists Confront Creationism* is a "collection of polemics." Actually, it is a compilation of fifteen scientific articles, including four on fossils and intermediate forms, such as "Creationism and Gaps in the Fossil Record" by Laurie Godfrey.

Johnson says that "a creationist is not necessarily a biblical literalist, but rather anyone who believes that God creates." Wrong. The creationists who confront us *are* biblical literalists and, contrary to Johnson, there are many people who believe that God creates and who also accept evolution. Johnson says that Darwinists (his coined term for all who believe in evolution) are having difficulty concealing "the religious implications of their system." His implication that evolution is a form of religion is a myth originating in the creationist literature.

Johnson's opening discussion incorrectly states that "the most famous piece of evidence for Darwinism is a study of an English peppered-moth population. . . ." He uses the peppered-moth example three times. The phenomenon shows fluctuations of populations rather than evolution, and even creationists have pointed this out (Kofahl and Segraves, *The Creation Explanation,* 1975).

Johnson doesn't mention the new findings in molecular biology that permeate modern evolutionary science. Biochemists found out how to determine the sequences of amino acids in proteins. Hemoglobin

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molecules of human beings differ by about 15 percent from horse hemoglobin when the sequences of the two molecules are aligned and compared. Chimpanzee and human hemoglobins are identical. As more hemoglobin molecules became sequenced, the steady increase in divergence, calibrated from reference points in the fossil record, showed evidence of a so-called *molecular evolutionary clock*. The same evidence was found in another family of proteins, the cytochromes *c*, and this made it possible to conclude that the common ancestor of yeast, plants, and vertebrates lived about 1.2 billion years ago. So much for the creationist estimate of six to ten thousand years ago for the day of creation.

Evolution starts when a gene duplicates, and each duplicate replicates independently. Mutations take place at random, and the two duplicates accumulate mutations at different locations, so that divergence takes place. This divergence gives rise to two sets of phenotypic properties.

Johnson says that evolution

> is based . . . upon a highly controversial philosophical presupposition. The controversy over evolution is therefore not going to go away as people become better educated in the subject. On the contrary, the more people learn about the philosophical content of what scientists are calling "the fact of evolution" the less they are going to like it.

Evolution was functioning for billions of years before the existence of philosophers. Where were Johnson and philosophy when the evolutionary divergence of the mammals took place about 100 million years ago?

In summary, lawyer Phillip Johnson is out of his field when he attempts to describe evolution. Worse, he says nothing about the real problem with creationism, which is the never-ending campaign by creationists to impose their ideas forcibly on other people. Instead of describing this, Johnson philosophizes irrelevantly about Darwinism and naturalism. There is nothing in his article that makes it worth publishing. The space could have been used for information on new findings in molecular evolution.

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## Matthew Berke

I am not competent to judge the purely scientific arguments in Phillip Johnson's essay—particularly his suggestion that paleontologists have suppressed evidence unfavorable to Darwinism, thus concealing a fossil gap. Such allegations I can only put in the category of "important, if true."

It must be stressed, however, that it is not necessary to refute Darwinism on scientific grounds in order to maintain the religious truth claims expressed in the biblical account of history: e.g., God's sovereignty and creative initiative, man's free will, his unique dignity in the universe, and his supernatural end. Philosophy, rather than science, is the final battleground in the evolution debate, at least insofar as that debate becomes a struggle between naturalism and supernaturalism to have the final say on man's status.

On this philosophical ground—which is really just a comprehensive application of common sense—the religious estimation of man's stature prevails, no matter what is discovered, or not discovered, in the fossil record. Since Professor Johnson only hints at this fact in his article, I would like to present several points that merit greater consideration.

The real issue in the evolution controversy is not whether man in his purely physical aspect arrived in the world full-formed or whether he passed through successive evolutionary stages en route to his present state. Whatever the answer to this question, the real issue is whether a creature possessing human (or any other) physiognomy could, without supernatural aid, come to have the spiritual and intellectual characteristics that are associated with personhood in its fullest sense: an ability to survey and consider the whole of reality, including a consciousness of the self and the forces acting on the self; a sense of transcendence and free will; a deep, and apparently ineradicable, longing for a meaningful existence in this world and an eternal life beyond it.

Man is not in fact a mere link in the chain of natural causation, which is science's sole principle for interpreting reality. That is to say, man is not, as pure naturalism would have it, merely an object in nature which is acted upon and reacts according to fixed general laws, a passive receiver of prior causes and a non-willing, non-responsible transmitter of future effects, whose consciousness and action are completely caught up in the causal nexus of matter and time. To be sure, he is a creature whose mental as well as physical states are conditioned by previous causes in nature and in his environment: chemical, biological, climatic, cultural, etc.

And yet human existence can never be *fully* explained in terms of nature or prior causes, because in its transcendence it rises above and surveys a chain of causes beyond the immediate circumstances, and in its freedom it inserts its own will into the causal flow, redirecting and reordering it. The human will is thus itself a cause, an *uncaused* cause, whose creative power points to a greater creative power beyond itself—in short, to God. A comprehensive view of human being is memorably expressed by Reinhold Niebuhr, in the opening chapter of *The Nature and Destiny of Man*:

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> The obvious fact is that man is a child of nature, subject to its vicissitudes, compelled by its necessities, driven by its impulses, and confined within the brevity of years which nature permits its varied organic forms, allowing them some, but not too much latitude. The other less obvious fact is that man is a spirit who stands outside of nature, life, himself, his reason, and the world.

Human nature is an indissoluble compound of nature and spirit, comprised of one part that belongs to the natural world, and is susceptible to scientific analysis and description, and another part that belongs to a realm that transcends nature. Though human transcendence and freedom are clearly influenced, affected, and limited by the human body and its environment, they remain to some extent outside and above the world of nature, and thus also the province of science. It is a relatively minor matter whether God infused the transcendent capacity into a freshly made creature or an upwardly mobile hominid that had evolved through various transformations, from an amoeba to a tadpole to an assortment of amphibians and mammals until, as in the familiar diagrams and animations, it looks more or less like Carl Sagan.

In either case, the arrival of man—as distinguished from merely his carcass—necessarily involved a creative act and a power outside the realm of material nature where scientific knowledge is sovereign. While it is conceivable that the physical being of man might have developed through evolution, according to physical laws charted and explained by science, it is not conceivable that man in his total being could exist without a creative act by some transcendent agency, the God of the Bible being the prime suspect.

It might be said, indeed it often is said, that transcendence and freedom are illusions, that our sense of them can be accounted for solely in naturalistic terms. Yet there is an illogical, usually hidden, presupposition in this argument, since a creature completely submerged in the process of nature could have no certain knowledge of the processes of nature, let alone of himself. There would be only private, subjective knowledge based on the environmental influences acting on individuals and classes of individuals. The assertion of a completely naturalistic metaphysic would then represent the end point, rather than the starting point, of all inquiry and discussion. For scientists to presume any knowledge of regularities and causal relations in nature they must presuppose a measure of transcendence over its processes.

This point was well made by the nineteenth-century English philosopher T. H. Green in his *Prolegomena to Ethics,* where he asks "whether a being that was merely the result of natural forces could form a theory of those forces explaining himself?" His answer: No, it could not, since to be conscious of such forces "implies that there is something in him independent of those forces, which may determine the relationship in which he shall stand to them . . . however much this conclusion may be disguised. . . . If we were merely phenomena among phenomena we could not have knowledge of a world of phenomena. . . ." To deny, in the name of science, the freedom that transcends nature, is thus to destroy the implicit foundation of scientific as well as religious truth—much as the ancient philosopher of Crete negated his own proposition when he declared that "all Cretans are liars."

Religious believers are dismayed by evolution theories because, by locating the origin of all things in the brute indifference of matter, these theories seem to destroy the eschatological hope for that perfection and perpetuity of life beyond the grave in which we are reunited with loved ones and freed from the curses of sin and death. But science cannot prove that we are no more than highly complex and evolved parcels of matter—indeed, as we have seen, it cannot even pose this as a theory without undermining itself. As Niebuhr says, we are both "children of nature" and transcendent spirits. The origin and current state of our humanity clearly partake of a transcendent miracle of creation. For our future hope we must rely on God's power and lovingkindness to re-create the world and the human soul.

MATTHEW BERKE *is Managing Editor of* FIRST THINGS.

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*(Editors' note: Phillip Johnson will reply to his critics in the November issue.)*

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# Heaven Is My Home: Memoirs of a Lutheran Boyhood

***James Nuechterlein***

It sometimes seems to me through the mists of memory that I spent my childhood in church. That is not actually the case, of course. There *was* the weekly Sunday morning service, preceded by Sunday School, and it was invariable, no more to be questioned or argued over than attendance at regular school on Monday morning. Sunday meant church, and that was that. But aside from special occasions—midweek services during Lent, church suppers (to this day I avoid church basements because they invariably bring to mind those tedious, endless suppers)—that was all. A few hours each Sunday morning, and yet that experience dominates my recollections of childhood.

Which is not to suggest that those memories are negative. They are not, though they are not especially positive, either. Church simply *was*, part of that taken-for-granted world that children—or at least children as unimaginative or unrebellious as I was—accept as the nature of things. Church was like my parents or my brother and sisters: not to be compared with possible alternatives or weighed in the balance but simply to be acknowledged as a given of existence.

But part of church, at least, I loved—the hymns. I was as a singer much as I was as an athlete: more enthusiasm than talent. I sang loudly and more or less on key, and because my father was organist and choir director of the various Lutheran churches we attended during my boyhood, I was always drafted for the children's choir and occasionally even given a semi-prominent role, but I was never as good as my family heritage or personal eagerness might have predicted.

Still, I sang, and with great earnestness. As with most children—and, for that matter, most adults—my preferences had less to do with the words of the hymns than the melodies. My bent was toward the romantic, not to say the kitschy. I was (as I still am) regularly moved to tears by melodies that I know (though I did not then know) are designed to do precisely that. The Lutheran heritage in music is far from barren—Luther himself was a musician of note and to be Lutheran is to know that J. S. Bach is to music as Shakespeare is to literature—but the musical culture of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) had by the 1940s been considerably corrupted by American evangelical Protestantism, and I wallowed in the corruption.

I cannot pick out any one hymn of childhood as my favorite: there were so many. But there is one that comes regularly to mind when I think of those years, in large part because it is so totally relegated to that time. Many, even most, of my childhood favorites I still get to sing at least on occasion. Lutherans today are both more sophisticated and more liturgically minded than they were in my youth and so they are less tolerant of the sentimental nineteenth-century gospel songs that for so long dominated Protestant hymnody, but they will now and then allow those of us at mid-life or beyond to sing again the songs we grew up with but which more informed tastes tell us (and we try to tell ourselves) we should not have liked as much as we did. But there are limits, and "I'm But a Stranger Here" is definitely beyond them.

The problem is not in the music, though Arthur S. Sullivan's (yes, of Gilbert and Sullivan) melody is predictable and banal, but in the words. The theology they express is that from which most Lutherans today want desperately to distance themselves.

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*I'm but a stranger here, Heav'n is my home;*
*Earth is a desert drear, Heav'n is my home.*
*Danger and sorrow stand Round me on every hand;*
*Heav'n is my fatherland, Heav'n is my home.*

*What though the tempest rage, Heav'n is my home;*
*Short is my pilgrimage, Heav'n is my home;*
*And time's wild wintry blast Soon shall be overpast;*
*I shall reach home at last, Heav'n is my home.*

*There at my Savior's side Heav'n is my home;*
*I shall be glorified, Heav'n is my home.*
*There are the good and blest, Those I love most and best;*
*And there I, too, shall rest, Heav'n is my home.*

*Therefore I murmur not, Heav'n is my home;*
*Whate'er my earthly lot, Heav'n is my home;*
*And I shall surely stand There at my Lord's right hand,*
*Heav'n is my fatherland, Heav'n is my home.*

If ever a hymn perfectly expressed the quietism and escapism to which Lutheran theology at its worst is presumably given, this is it (even if neither hymnodist nor lyricist [T. R. Taylor] happened to be Lutheran). The sense of life as that which we but pass through ("I'm but a stranger here"), of misery as our natural condition ("earth is a desert drear") and therefore stoically to be borne ("Therefore I murmur not . . . whate'er my earthy lot"), all of which because our fleeting and brutish existence here is but the prelude to our true end ("Heav'n is my fatherland, Heav'n is my home"): this hymn catches it all. Marx's view of religion as a failure of nerve, a rationalization of misery and injustice and a projection onto an otherworldly future of that which ought to be realized here, would seem in this hymn to find quintessential expression.

I can't say that I thought through the theological implications of "I'm But a Stranger Here," but its view of things was not inconsistent with what my overall church experience taught me to be true. The theology of the LCMS focused unflinchingly on sin and its consequences. We were not Fundamentalists, and no self-respecting LCMS congregation would have abided a minister who preached hellfire-and-damnation sermons. We were theologically literate—the subtle dialectics of Lutheran theology required doctrinal astuteness—and we had little use in our piety for emotionalism or enthusiasm. But if we were not Fundamentalists, even less were we theological liberals. We were orthodox Christians of Augustinian persuasion—which is to say again that we knew about sin and its consequences.

The ultimate consolation of the gospel message—the message of salvation—dissolves, we knew, into sentimentality without a clear sense of what it is that the gospel saves us *from*. No illusions for us about human nature, no nonsense about innate goodness rendered corrupt only by experience or society. Sin was real and personal and its consequence was death and separation from God, a death and separation conquered only in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Beyond that—and this was central to our view of life—our reconciliation with God, though accomplished in time, would only be fully realized in eternity. We were, by grace through faith and by virtue of our baptisms, new persons in Christ, but the final destruction of the fallen Old Adam would find its consummation only at the End Time. In the meantime, we were, though ultimately redeemed, still marked by sin.

As sinners in a sinful world, knowing that the infinitely better awaited us beyond the grave, we experienced life as the time in-between. Life was not for us without its joys and graces, but we expected from it only imperfect fulfillment. We were—and those who have read their Augustine know not just the words but their import—strangers, pilgrims, aliens. We sojourned here, but we looked beyond. Heaven was our home.

To look on life that way was most un-American. Being Lutherans, people who believe that God rules in his left-hand temporal kingdom (through justice) as well as in his right-hand kingdom of eternity (through love), we were not truly escapists, quietists, or non-participants. But we often looked and acted that way. And in the American context—that complex mix of enlightenment philosophy, republican civic morality, commercial instinct, and evangelical Calvinist religion—we were most thoroughly not at home.

Our separateness from the American reality, rooted in theology, was accentuated by ethnicity. Members of the LCMS were overwhelmingly German-American, and the history of the United States in the twentieth century—particularly that of the First and Second World Wars—has made German-Americans culturally uneasy. The First World War made Germanic identity politically suspect; the Second made it morally problematic. My parents, hoping to find acceptance for themselves and their children as Americans, gave up much of the Germanness that had defined them in the secure ethnic enclaves in which they grew up. The rural Lutheran communities of the Saginaw Valley in central Michigan where they had spent their childhoods were so thoroughly German in language and culture that they might as well still have been located in the Franconia (now part of Bavaria) from which they had sprung.

My siblings and I, thoroughly conditioned by the Nazi experience not to identify ourselves by our ethnic origins, knew nonetheless that our identity as Missouri

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Synod Lutherans tied us inescapably to an ethnic tradition that, while sufficiently removed from us that we did not have to feel guilty about it, remained culturally suspect. We could avoid being ashamed of our German origins only by not taking them seriously. Yet they were there, and their being there somehow contributed to our sense of ourselves as outsiders in America.

The combination in us of theological preoccupation and cultural insecurity made politics a marginal concern. No Lutheran pastor in my childhood ever made—whether in or out of the pulpit—a public political comment (though it was generally assumed that most of them, if they voted at all, voted Republican), and while we occasionally talked politics at home (my father was a Robert Taft isolationist Republican), the true family passion was religion. When the larger family gathered, the talk was almost exclusively of the Church—by which was meant, of course, the LCMS. (It was one of the great curiosities of my childhood that so few people outside of my family and congregation understood the centrality of the fate of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to world-historical development.)

None of this should be taken to suggest that we were politically estranged from our country. Quite the contrary. Most members of the LCMS were deeply patriotic. They voted—like their pastors, usually Republican. (Indeed, the experience of my childhood so ingrained the identification of LCMS orthodoxy and Republican affiliation that I found it difficult for years thereafter not to suspect that disavowal of the latter brought the former into question.) But neither politics nor patriotism was of ultimate concern. In the greater scheme of things, politics fit in there somewhere with sports: something that could engage our interest—even, in its clearly subordinate place, our lesser passions—but never our vital concern. Politics, like all other activities this side of the kingdom, was flawed, transient, not worthy of total engagement. It paled—as did all else—into insignificance before the one thing that genuinely mattered.

All this was part of my childhood and of the context in which the sentiments of "I'm But a Stranger Here" could appear unexceptionable. Much of it I would not now recommend. It made at best for an incomplete vision of the Christian life, at worst for a radically distorted one.

Of those radical distortions we are today unavoidably aware. The record of the German Lutherans during the Nazi era was, all in all, morally scandalous, and many have taken that record as a definitive negative judgment on Lutheran two-kingdoms theology. I do not myself accept that judgment. One can concede that the tendency of two-kingdoms theology to subordinate political concerns to a lesser realm made it easier than it should have been for Lutherans under Hitler to ignore or rationalize the regime's moral evils, but the Nazis' anti-Semitism and their exaltation of the State to idolatrous heights could find no justification in legitimate Lutheran doctrines of morality or church-state relations. German Lutherans gave way before Hitler not as a logical conclusion of Lutheran theology but as a craven betrayal of Christian or humanistic ethics of any sort. The theological and moral witness of a Dietrich Bonhoeffer stands as evidence that, for those ready to look for them, the Lutheran tradition provides resources enough for resistance to tyranny.

But the collective failure remains, and if it does not in itself constitute evidence against Lutheran construals of political morality, it does provide salutary warning against a characteristic deformation of such construals. It is one thing to know the limits of justice, quite another to suppose that because political justice must always be ambiguous and imperfect, it does not really matter at all and so can be relegated to the margins of our concern.

A less momentous and more recent instance than that of the Nazi experience offers a bizarre variation on the distortions to which Lutheran piety is liable. Some months back, Americans found bewildered fascination in the story of John Emil List, a Missouri Synod Lutheran who, out of despair over his inability to provide for his family and concern over the state of their souls, killed his mother, wife, and three children. (This example hits embarrassingly close to home: List is my mother's maiden name and John List is, in fact, a distant cousin.) List's conclusion that for his loved ones death was preferable to suffering or to the possibility of falling away from the faith provides a perverse, grotesque, yet not entirely unrecognizable extension of the piety that I knew as a child. After all, if "I'm but a stranger here" and if the heavenly home to which our paths are directed provides the only genuine satisfaction we can know ("earth is a desert drear"), well, then . . . List's original intention to dispatch his family on All Saints Day—a day, he wrote his pastor, particularly appropriate for them to leave this world and enter the next—is chilling evidence of a mind gone quite mad, but mad in a manner not untouched by Lutheran understandings.

Now no Lutheran in adequate possession of his church's teaching will suppose that he has the right to play God, to make life-and-death decisions for himself or others. I would not for a moment lay at the feet of the LCMS John List's homicidal delusions. He had only a greatly flawed understanding of his church's dogma, and no understanding at all of its faith. But there is something instructive for Lutherans in pondering where and how List went so radically wrong.

In clinging so zealously to the thing most important, Lutherans tended unnecessarily to denigrate those penultimate goods that are God's gifts to us. Our visions focused on the transcendent, we did not always

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get from life what we should have because we did not always give to it what it deserved. Rather than see eternal life as a continuum begun in our baptisms and extended through life into eternity, we were tempted to posit instead a radical discontinuity between "time's wild wintry blast" and our destiny in time to come. It is the great conceit of all generations that they know more and better than those who came before, but I nonetheless am persuaded that many in my parents' generation led lives more parched than they needed to be because of religious sensibilities more constricted than they should have been.

I concede the danger of over-theologizing here. After all, that generation endured both the pressures of the coerced Americanization process that occurred among German-Americans in the wake of the First World War as well as the more immediate agonies and uncertainties of the Great Depression. Straitened circumstances do make for straitened lives.

Perhaps it is most accurate to say that those generational experiences intensified certain tendencies already present in Lutheran piety. The Lutheranism of my childhood appears to me in retrospect not only more negative than it had to be but also more fearful. It was often emotionally repressed, inclined to view human loves not as extensions of God's love for us but as rivals of that love. We worried more than was necessary that love of life might lessen love of God. That can happen, of course, but I'm not sure I ever knew a Missouri Synod Lutheran for whom it was a clear and present danger. Even as it is sometimes suggested that the idea of Lutheran ethics is oxymoronic, so it is only with great difficulty that one can even imagine a Dionysian Lutheran.

There was also in the piety of my childhood—and this is particularly ironic in view of Martin Luther's suspicion of human reason—an unhealthy strain of rationalism. Not rationalism in the enlightenment sense, of course, but rather in an exaggerated emphasis on right belief. It was as if faith consisted not in trust in the promises of God as to our eternal destiny, but in rational assent to a prescribed set of doctrines. As Lutherans we knew—if we knew nothing else—that we could not earn our way into heaven by our deeds, but we sometimes gave way to the presumption that we could make our way there by the rigor of our orthodoxy. We were never works-mongers, but we were occasionally doctrine-mongers.

All that being said, I would not leave the matter there. If there is much in the piety in which I grew up that I regret, there is also much for which I will be forever grateful. In theology as in ethics: no one system can command all the virtues. The weaknesses of Missouri's theology were the obverse of its strengths.

If that theology was too often negative, it was never frivolous or insubstantial. If it was excessively fearful, it did not cave in to every passing fad from the secular culture. If it paid insufficient attention to questions of social justice, it never for a moment supposed that political issues can or should carry eschatological freight. To be a Missouri Synod Lutheran in my childhood was to be a serious person. It was to be undeceived without being cynical.

One hears of "cultural Catholics," those who have forsaken the doctrines of the faith but who nonetheless feel some sort of continuing tie, however tenuous, to Catholic identity. If there is such a thing as "cultural Lutheranism," it has less to do with tugs of memory or communal nostalgia than with a certain habit of unsentimental analysis of the human condition. Lutherans throw themselves as radically as they do on God's grace because they know as intensely as they do the reality of sin—sin not simply or even essentially as concession to the passions but as fundamental alienation from the will of God.

Martin Marty has written in recent years of "the cultural unavailability of hell." Christianity has lost—more, I think, for better than for worse—its primal negative sanction: it cannot, outside of Fundamentalist circles, scare people into faith by threats of eternal punishment. As already indicated, Lutherans have never been Fundamentalists, and they have never been comfortable with hellfire-and-brimstone piety, but it is difficult to see how over time one can continue to speak meaningfully of sin without insisting that sin—like grace—has consequences. Lutheran theology rests on the dialectic of law and gospel. If the law is not of significance, it is difficult to see how the gospel can be. The Lutheranism of my childhood taught me of the life-and-death importance of the presence or absence of God in human life. If the question of God matters at all, how could things be otherwise? I would not presume to spell out the precise eternal consequences of that presence or absence—that is God's business, not ours—but it strikes me (the Missouri influence again) that those consequences cannot be tamely domesticated to our specifications.

It is not only in regard to the Last Things that my LCMS nurturing instructed me, but to the penultimate ones as well. As to politics, for example, not only were all Missouri Lutherans securely inoculated against the temptations of the Social Gospel—or anything like it—we were, one might say, made safe for patriotism. We could love America—feel toward it all that respect, pride, and affection that it is natural for people to extend to their homelands—without being tempted to the idolatrous nationalism that has deformed modern history. How could American Lutherans make an idol of a nation whose philosophical assumptions (enlightenment liberalism) and dominant religious tradition (revivalist Calvinism) were so fundamentally at odds with their most basic understandings? Because we were at the deepest level of our beings strangers in America, we could be safely at home there. We could affirm all its good gifts without making of them more than they warranted.

One comes back again and again to the Augustinian

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theme. *The City of God* makes clear that for Christians of any society, theirs is a pilgrimage in an ultimately alien country. Every Sunday of my childhood we listened to the pastor recite—at what then seemed tedious length—the General Prayer in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. It ended with these words (I still know them from memory though I have not heard them spoken in years):

> And as we are strangers and pilgrims on earth, help us by true faith and a godly life to prepare for the world to come; doing the work Thou hast given us to do while it is day; before the night cometh when no man can work. And when our last hour shall come, support us by Thy power and receive us into Thine everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. . . .

Strangers and pilgrims on earth—yet, as Augustine also knew, necessary participants as well. Growing up in the Missouri Synod I understood, with Augustine, that for all that we must give to life on earth, and for all that it can so richly give back, we have here no abiding city. Which is just another way of saying, of course, that I knew that heaven is my home. PT

## AFTER THE WEDDING: DIVING OFF ISLA MUJERES

It's been three days now. We continue to find
splinters of rice clinging to our scalps; piercing
no skin but adamant, predatory at the root.
They will not be removed. Thinking back to the Mass
we recall the smallest things—yellow neckties
splashed with ciliated paisley, old silk dresses with
piscine flares, and one thin strand of cultured pearls.

Transplanted to the haunting, siren surge of Garrafon
Beach, our feet sink fast in earth and we
allow ourselves a moment's burial
in this benevolent grave of wet sand.
Our guide Frederico insists we call him Freddy.
(Must acquaintance require always the abridgment
of the formal?)

Aiming for the reef we forget
our fins. Soles get cut on
coral, bleeding bold red into
the surf. Freddy tells us
it's worth it beyond. He is right.

The Daliesque choreography of life here! A
mixed pavane of wrasse, grunt, and goby maneuvers
beside us, plucking late lunch from pockets of stone.
Layers of plankton cover layers of bone that cover layers
of ancient rock. Algae drifts above, hogging the sun,
lacking decent radix, its slippery patches an unsophisticated
green. But anything green is, at least, alive.

A piqued queen angelfish—"Isabelita"—watches from the darkness.
Brilliant among the blue-dappled sea whips, her wary gaze nails
us. The eyes are the same as my mother's. Remember?
Our last dance before leaving. Those eyes—
pleased that we came to realize this paradise,
but more than half betrayed
by the slow disruption of home.

**Lori Brannigan Kelly**

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# What Families Are For

*Gilbert Meilaender*

In his engagingly titled book, *What's Wrong With the World*, G. K. Chesterton argued that his fellow citizens could not repair the defects of the family because they had no ideal at which to aim. Neither the Tory (Gudge) nor the Socialist (Hudge) had an ideal that viewed the family as sacred, an image of what the family at its best might be.

> The Tory says he wants to preserve family life in Cindertown; the Socialist very reasonably points out to him that in Cindertown at present there isn't any family life to preserve. But Hudge, the Socialist, in his turn, is highly vague and mysterious about whether he would preserve the family life if there were any; or whether he will try to restore it where it has disappeared. . . . The Tory sometimes talks as if he wanted to tighten the domestic bonds that do not exist; the Socialist as if he wanted to loosen the bonds that do not bind anybody. The question we all want to ask of both of them is the original ideal question, "Do you want to keep the family at all?"

The result of such confusion, Chesterton thought, was that in his own day "the cultured class is shrieking to be let out of the decent home, just as the working class is shouting to be let into it."

In such circumstances one needed an ideal—a point from which to begin and on the basis of which to think about the world. Chesterton began "with a little girl's hair."

> That I know is a good thing at any rate. Whatever else is evil, the pride of a good mother in the beauty of her daughter is good. It is one of those adamantine tendernesses which are the touchstones of every age and race. If other things are against it, other things must go down. . . . With the red hair of one she-urchin in the gutter I will set fire to all modern civilization. Because a girl should have long hair, she should have clean hair; because she should have clean hair, she should not have an unclean home; because she should not have an unclean home, she should have a free and leisured mother; because she should have a free mother, she should not have an usurious landlord; because there should not be an usurious landlord, there should be a redistribution of property; because there should be a redistribution of property, there shall be a revolution. That little urchin with the gold-red hair, whom I have just watched toddling past my house, she shall not be lopped and lamed and altered; her hair shall not be cut short like a convict's; no, all the kingdoms of the earth shall be hacked about and mutilated to suit her. She is the human and sacred image; all around her the social fabric shall sway and split and fall; the pillars of society shall be shaken, and the roofs of ages come rushing down; and not one hair of her head shall be harmed.

I am not myself capable of such a peroration, but I confess to more than a little sympathy for Chesterton's approach. I did not actually think about him, however, until I had made my way through several recent documents on the family issued by Protestant bodies in this country.

Well-meaning they surely are, as well as sincerely troubled by human need. But, feeling it necessary to "affirm" every person in whatever state he or she may be, these documents find it difficult to set before us any clear ideal at which we ought to aim. To articulate such an ideal might seem too much like condemning

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those who do not meet it. Because there are blended families, group families, and single-parent families—all of them constituted by people whose needs the churches aim to serve—one may become increasingly reluctant to hold up an ideal. That, at any rate, seems to me a reasonable—and charitable—explanation of our current circumstances.

To illustrate: A recent study, still in its "draft for testing" stage and titled *Living in Covenant With God and One Another,* was prepared for the World Council of Churches. It makes a virtue of our necessities. "Families take many forms. We tend to idealize the family form we know. Yet no single structure captures the heart of the family." It should be no surprise, then, to discover that the document has almost nothing to say about the relation of parents and children. Rather, its intention is focused on certain moral quandaries or on those who find themselves in troubling situations. Thus, after a section on "healthy sexuality" (devoted chiefly to exploration of false dualisms), the document proceeds to treat divorce and remarriage, domestic violence, homosexuality, singleness, abortion, and AIDS. The closest we come to a discussion of what the family ought to be is in a discussion of singleness. This is what we are told: The Bible is a "family-oriented book"—which means that ancient Hebrew society was organized in a patriarchal clan structure and that lines of descent and rules of family obligation were emphasized. Jesus, however, though aware of the importance of family love, reinterpreted the meaning of the family. Thus, for example, in Mark 3:34-35, Jesus is told that his mother and brothers are waiting to see him. But looking at the crowd standing around him, he replies: "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother." The document comments:

> Jesus, it seems, was saying that what is most important is not the family form or structure, though these are necessary for society, but the quality of love, trust, caring, and so on that are products of our basic love of God. He was redefining family, not in terms of the need of society for stable families, but of persons to be members of a community that seeks to serve God.

One might wish to argue. For example, we might rethink any characterization of ancient Hebrew society and reevaluate the uniqueness of what Jesus says when we remember that the call of Yahweh to the patriarch Abraham was already a call *away* from family: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." To be sure, the hard sayings of Jesus about the family are important. But they are far more than just a reinterpretation of the family, and they are certainly not simply a claim that all that counts morally is the "quality" of a relationship. They may call upon us to transcend the family, but, as C. S. Lewis reminds us, we must first know and value the thing we are transcending if our action is to have religious significance.

> The sight of a Christian rebuking his mother, though tragic, may be edifying; but only if we are quite sure that he has been a good son and that, in his rebuke, spiritual zeal is triumphing, not without agony, over strong natural affection. The moment there is reason to suspect that he *enjoys* rebuking her—that he believes himself to be rising above the natural level while he is still, in reality, groveling below it in the unnatural—the spectacle becomes merely disgusting. The hard sayings of the Lord are wholesome to those only who find them hard.

We need to be persuaded that, in disavowing any ideal of what the family ought to be, we are rising above, not simply falling below, the natural realm.

*Living in Covenant With God and One Another* appears to be a rather representative document. Like most recent statements from Protestant church bodies, it attests to the seriousness with which such Christians still take the marital bond, which continues to be understood as the most appropriate context for sexual relations. In addition, one can find from Protestant churches statement after statement about certain problems or quandaries that may impinge upon the family, such as abortion, gender-roles conflict, and homosexuality.

But what is said about the family itself? On this topic, we find chiefly an affirmation of diversity. One will not find this emphasis articulated more simply and straightforwardly than in the statement on family life priority adopted by the United Church of Christ in 1981. It calls for the identification and development of resources "which will enable all families to be ministered to creatively and all persons, regardless of their family patterns, to be affirmed and supported in the life of the Church. . . ." Behind such statements lies an emphasis articulated already in 1978 by G. William Sheek, then Director of Family Ministries and Human Sexuality of the National Council of Churches. He suggested that the "quality" rather than the "structure" of relationships should define the family. And he did so based on the belief that this is the New Testament vision: a family "built around the quality of relationships shared by the members of God's kingdom rather than blood ties." Similarly, the 1980 Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church says:

> Marriage and family patterns have always had historical and cultural features that vary under changing circumstances. Basic to any family form is commitment to one another's care and

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> welfare. Responsible family relationships may be expressed in a variety of ways. . . . The church is concerned about the well-being of all persons in all family forms.

This is, of course, not the only thing the churches have had to say. But their chief wisdom about the family seems to lie in this simple statement from the former Lutheran Church in America: "The family appears in many forms in different times and places."

Yet this *leitmotif* may say both too much and too little about the family. It may seem radical. But it turns out to be rather bland. We say *too little* about the family because we find ourselves unable to articulate what it should be at its best. We say *too much* because we do not take with full seriousness the way in which the family—even at its best—is not just reinterpreted but transcended in the kingdom of God. When our focus is only on "quality of relationship" versus "structure," the family tends to become for us chiefly a locus of self-fulfillment for singular individuals. Thus, for example, a "Family Life Statement" prepared in 1980 by the Division for Life and Mission in the Congregation (American Lutheran Church) suggested:

> Families need to clarify the role and function of each individual on the basis of that person's uniqueness. . . . Role expectations, since they contribute to the structure of relationships, must be taken seriously. These roles, however, should never become more important than the persons involved.

A more helpful example of a recent church statement is the *Evangelical Catechism*. A translation and adaptation of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany's *Evangelischer Gemeindekatechismus*, this volume was prepared under the auspices of the Division for Life and Mission in the Congregation and the Division for Theological Education and Ministry of the former American Lutheran Church. The chapter on "Parents and Children," perhaps because it is aimed at catechetical use, does seek to provide some guidance. Even here, however, there is a certain reluctance to speak normatively. For example:

> It is no longer possible to assume that a child lives with two parents, a father who works outside the home and a mother who works at home. This idealized picture of family life was never completely accurate, but today it is just one style of family life among many others. Today children are brought up in a variety of settings, with a variety of adult models and types of care.

As a descriptive statement, this is no doubt unexceptionable. But, again, a desire to help everyone, whatever their family circumstances, makes it more difficult to provide one particular sort of help: to depict what a family at its best ought to be.

And if we are not careful, such an approach can fail to capture what the family ought to be and often has been. Thus, for example, the *Catechism* notes that we have learned a good bit about the importance of nurture in a child's early years, "and we understand how important parents—adult persons who care for children—are." That formulation, applicable to personnel at day-care centers and babysitters, is certainly inadequate to describe what we ought to mean by a parent. That the adults working at day-care centers may sometimes provide more nurture for children than do their parents is a description of our problem, not a reason to redefine those adults as parents.

In short, in a culture quite uncertain about the meaning of parenthood, a church eager to serve and affirm the lives of countless different men and women is able to say relatively little about the structure of the parent-child bond. It is reduced to speaking about the quality of relationships. That, at least, is my own hunch about the reason for the relative paucity of material about the family coming from the churches and the character of what material there is.

What to do in such circumstances? We might take heart from words Karl Barth wrote when publishing the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics*. Recognizing the disarray of the church for which and to which he wrote, he wondered how it was possible to speak on behalf of such a church. Nevertheless, he wrote, "because I think any one would wait in vain till the day of judgment for an Evangelical Church that took itself seriously, unless in all humility he was willing to risk being such a Church in his own place and as well as he knew how," he took up the task. In that spirit we now turn to consider some of the pressure points at which the church might articulate its vision of the bond between parents and children.

## II

The first thing that must be said, however—a point only faintly adumbrated in the WCC statement's suggestion that Jesus had redefined the family—is that the fellowship of the kingdom of God, though it may be spoken of as a family, is neither generated nor sustained through biological transmission of life nor by the love given and received in the history of our families. The kingdom is not a continuation, or even a reinterpretation, of the family as we know it; rather, it is a new creation.

I have not forgotten the day when, as a graduate student at Princeton, I sat in Firestone Library talking with a fellow graduate student who happened to be a Benedictine monk. In the course of our conversation I uttered some rather ordinary platitude about the

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family being the fundamental unit of society. To this he responded—with the immediacy of what had become for him a natural response—"Oh, I don't know. After all, Jesus said, 'Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' " And he had a point. We have already cited Jesus' word (in Mark 3:35) that "whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother." We find a similar lesson in the well-known story of the boy Jesus, left behind by his parents in the temple (Luke 2:41-51). His parents, fearful that he is lost, eventually find him in the temple, "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions." His mother expresses her anxiety, a very natural parental concern, and Jesus' answer must have seemed a harsh response to her maternal concern. "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

This Jesus is proclaimed as the revelation of a God who is not dependent on the natural orders of this world to achieve his ends. To those who have confidence in such natural orders, John the Baptist says: "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." And why not? For this is the God who had set his hand upon Jacob rather than Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac. It is such a God whose presence Jesus announces and embodies in Luke 9:59-62.

> To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me say farewell to those at home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

The prophet Micah (7:6) had characterized the evils of his time in part through family imagery as a time when

> the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

But this very picture becomes for Jesus the possible and, in some instances, necessary result of his preaching of the kingdom, as in Matthew 10:34-37.

> Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

In the face of this recurrent theme of the Gospels, we do well to be careful in our praise of the family. As Karl Barth put it, we "must not blind ourselves to . . . [the fact] that the kingdom of God has come from heaven to earth, that it has taken solid shape amongst us, and that it has foreshadowed the end of all human history and therefore of the child-parent relationship."

Barth adds, rightly, that we cannot deduce from this any general rule about how all Christians must live. But we also cannot deny that even here and now some may be called by God away from the family. For some it may mean that "there is an orphaned state required for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, in which a man who like all others is the child of his parents must symbolize with his being and action the present but hidden creation which is not a mere prolongation of the old, but the new creation in relation to which the old has already passed away. . . ."

This is, therefore, the first word that must be spoken: of discontinuity between the kingdom of God and any earthly order, even one as significant as the family. But two more things must also be said. First, as was quoted above: "The hard sayings of the Lord are wholesome to those only who find them hard." If the world is the good creation of God, if indeed, as Ephesians 3:15 says, all fatherhood takes its name from Him, then such discontinuity—when we are faced with it—must be experienced first as painful and troubling.

Second, through and beyond such painful experience of discontinuity between the earthly family and the call of God, there may also come some sense of continuity. Even Barth, upon whom I have relied here, cannot keep from saying that the discontinuity "is not a question of the destruction but of the radical renewal of the child-parent relationship." He notes that the very last verse of the Old Testament (Malachi 4:6) looks forward to a time "before the great and terrible day of the Lord" when God "will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers." And, in fact, we are hard pressed to find better imagery with which to describe the promised kingdom—imagery for which there is dominical warrant. The same Jesus whose call may draw out of the orbit of the family could describe the promise of the coming kingdom precisely in familial terms.

> Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and

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> mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30)

What such a transformed familial community will be like we can scarcely say—and, to be sure, the life of the church in this age gives only the barest of hints. But it is significant that in reaching for images to describe the hoped-for kingdom, we are driven to see—beyond the death of all earthly communities at the cross, and the experienced discontinuity the cross brings—a certain continuity between the promised new life and the very best that we have known and experienced here and now. But, of course, this presumes that we can and should be able to say something about the structure of this "very best"—in order that we may know how great is the worth of the bond we may have to give up in answer to Jesus' call, and in order to find words to describe, however haltingly, the community of promise.

## III

When we think about the bond of parents and children, we must think first of the family as a biological community. Through this bond we are embedded in the world of nature, are marked by lines of kinship and descent, and are—from birth—individuals within communities.

Like the other animals, humans "bring forth . . . according to their kind" and, in more peculiarly human fashion, pass on to children their image and likeness (Gen. 1:24; 5:3). Our personhood is marked by that inheritance as we incarnate the union of the man and the woman who are our parents. They are not simply reproducing themselves. In reaching out to each other, they forge a community between those who are different and separate. When from their oneness they create a new human being, that act testifies to the truth that love for one other than the self—even and especially biologically, within the sexual differentiation—is a love that does not seek simply to see its own face in the loved one. This is the love that is creative of community.

And the bond formed between parents and children does in fact bind; with it come obligations. Parents have, whether they want it or not, the honor and responsibility to stand before their children as God's representatives. And children have that most puzzling of duties—gratitude for a bond in which they found themselves without in any way having chosen it. That is, in what seems to be merely a biological fact, we find moral significance embedded. The psalmist (127:3) writes that children are "a heritage from the Lord." The child as a gift of God is a sign of hope, of God's continued affirmation of his creation. Still more, the presence of the child indicates that the parents, as co-creators with God, have shared something of the mystery of divine love; their love-giving has proved to be life-giving. That such complete giving of the self should, in fact, give new life is the deepest mystery of God's being and is hinted at, as if in analogy, in the birth of a child.

We are, of course, free in many ways to transcend our embeddedness in nature, but we ought also to respect the embodied character of human life. As parents of children and children of parents, we are marked by the biological communities in which we find ourselves. We are not just free spirits, free to make of ourselves what we will. There is, in part at least, a "givenness" to our existence that limits us. Part of the task of a faithful life is to learn to receive that givenness with thanksgiving and to be trustworthy in the duties it lays upon us.

If this is in part the meaning of the bond of parents and children, we should be clear about one important truth. This bond may very often make us deeply happy; indeed, it may have the capacity to bring some of the greatest joys into human life. But though it often fulfills us, it does not exist simply for the sake of our fulfillment. Parents are not reproducing themselves; they are giving birth to another human being—equal to them in dignity and bound to them in ties of kinship, but not created for their satisfaction. To desire a child of "one's own" is understandable, but such language should be used only with great caution. Biological parenthood does not confer possession of children, nor should it lead us to hope for a "perfect" child. Rather, it calls us to the historical tasks of rearing, nurturing, and civilizing our children. All this—in order that the next generation may achieve its own relative independence. Self-giving, not self-fulfillment, lies at the heart of the parents' vocation. If such self-giving should prove to be deeply satisfying, we have reason to be thankful. But there are no guarantees of such a symmetrically satisfying result, and to seek them is not the best preparation for parenthood. To give birth is a venture that should always be carried out in hope and in faith that the Creator will continue to speak his "yes" upon the creation.

## IV

It seems, therefore, that if we wish to think properly of the family as a biological community, we must think of it also as a historical community. In love a man and a woman turn from themselves toward each other. They might, however, be forever content to turn toward each other—and to turn out from themselves no more than that. But in the child, their union, as a union, quite naturally turns outward. They are not permitted to think of themselves as individuals who come together simply for their own fulfillment. In the child they are given a task. Their union plays its role in a larger history, and it becomes part of their vocation to contribute to the ongoing life of a people. Certainly both Jews and Christians have commonly understood the bond of parents and children in this way.

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I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
things that we have heard and known,
that our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children,
but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders which he has wrought.
He established a testimony in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our fathers
to teach to their children;
that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and arise to tell them to their children,
so that they should set their hope in God. . . .
(Ps. 78:2-7)

This is in many ways the most fundamental task of parents: transmission of a way of life. When the son of the ancient Israelite asked, "What does this mean?" his father told again the story of the mighty acts of God, the story of their common life as a people. When a woman of Israel appeals to the biological bond and cries out to Jesus, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked," he responds: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:27-28). He points, we might say, to a further bond that ought to be built upon the basis of biological community but which, in any case, is finally more crucial: initiation into a way of life. In Ephesians 6:4, the apostle writes that fathers should not provoke their children to anger, but should "bring them up in the *paideia* and instruction of the Lord." That task of *paideia*, of nurture and inculcation of a way of life, is the calling of parents.

Of course, these biblical passages have in mind, in particular, the transmission of a religious tradition: the story of God's care for his people. But we need not deny that this points, more generally, to something fundamental. Parenthood is not just biological begetting. It is also history—a vocation to nurture the next generation, to initiate it into the human inheritance of knowledge and obligation. If today many feel that the family is—as we say—"in crisis," that may be in large part because we have little commitment to or sense of a story that we might pass on.

But passing on a story is what binds the generations together, and it is something quite different from the shared association of those concerned above all else for their respective career trajectories. It is also quite different from an understanding of parental nurture aimed principally at "enriching" the lives of individual children. In a family that understands itself as a historical community sharing a way of life not its alone, we will find it appropriate that some should make sacrifices for the sake of others and that we should make heavy claims upon each other.

Understood in this way, a family is something quite different from a political community, and the language of "rights"—which, in my own view, has served us well in the political sphere—is peculiarly unable to capture the texture of family life. Perhaps the most common use of the language of parental rights is to protect the possessive claims of those whose history of abuse or neglect as parents has largely undermined their claim to the title. But the language of "children's rights" is not likely to serve us much better. There will surely be occasions on which the state must intervene in the life of families in order to protect children, but it is more likely to be effective in acting against manifest evils than in positively restructuring families. For the state is a community of a quite different kind, and it simply has "no mode of entry" into the give-and-take of genuine family life. As Chesterton observed, "Creatures so close to each other as husband and wife, or a mother and children, have powers of making each other happy or miserable with which no public coercion can deal."

In the family understood as a historical community, we ought not shy away from thinking in terms of roles played by parents—even while we acknowledge and respect the truth that each set of parents will accomplish this in a way peculiarly theirs. Consider the fact that a mother is biologically equipped to nourish her newborn infant. In our historical freedom we are able to transcend that natural fact, and we certainly need not let it be determinative for our understanding of what motherhood means. But we should also not ignore it, as if our embodied condition carried no personal significance. No doubt there are many different ways to find and live out such significance, but we ought to seek them and not simply the freedom to be whatever we wish.

Perhaps we can get at this sense of motherhood as both nature and history by suggesting that a mother, though not "in her place," should seek to "be place" for her children. For she is that—the womb from which they come, the place to which they remain connected even as they gradually work out their separateness. The role of mother is so firmly grounded in biology that it can come to seem only necessity and not at all free opportunity—all biological given, and no freely developing history. Hence, in thinking about it we are probably not wrong to emphasize our historical freedom.

The opposite is true of a father's role. Lacking so obvious a biological attachment to the child, a father may too easily think himself free of that role, or may be uncertain of what it means that he should be a father. Perhaps, however, we can still learn something from the image of father as judge—one who ought to aim at fairness even when mediating between his children and the world outside the family.

If it should be true, as Carol Gilligan has argued,

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that men are drawn toward a morality of abstract justice and women toward a morality of connected webs of caring, and that neither of these taken by itself constitutes the whole of the moral realm, then mother and father together—but in different ways—may inculcate and transmit moral value and commitment. Just as history brings freedom from rigid role definitions, it may also give us the freedom to think seriously again about what it means to be not simply a unisex parent, but a mother or father in particular.

We noted earlier that the family as a biological community points us in the direction of self-giving love. The same is true when we envision the family as a historical community. Here even more clearly and starkly, the risk and venture of parenthood comes into view. Parents commit themselves to initiating their children into the human inheritance and, more particularly, into the stories that depict their way of life. In so doing they shape, mold, and civilize their children. But there are no guarantees that the final "product" of this process will be what the parents anticipated. Parents know this, of course, and are therefore understandably anxious about their children's future. Even if such anxiety is often understandable, it still constitutes a great temptation—the temptation to try to be the guarantor of our children's future, to protect them from all disappointment and suffering. And yet, to do that would be to deny their freedom to be an other like us, equal to us in dignity. This means that parents must seek more than their own satisfaction in rearing their children. They must give of themselves in faith and hope, recognizing that they are no more than co-creators and that they cannot shape the future.

## V

A prediction: Involve yourself in conversation with a stranger, conversation in which you are identifying yourself. Do so by depicting yourself in terms of your role as mother or father. There will eventually follow, as surely as night follows day, the question: "And what do you do for yourself?" At that point, unless you do not wish to be taken seriously, espouse commitment to a career.

If the twofold characterization of the family—as biological and historical community—is accurate, we ought not be surprised to discover that we today are radically confused when trying to think about the family. For ours is a world which insistently raises the question, "What do you do for yourself?" And, in the words of Gabriel Marcel, a family "is not created or maintained as an entity without the exercise of a fundamental generosity." To put it bluntly, in the family we find ourselves, in large measure, by giving ourselves to our functions. We lose our life—that grasping need to be someone—and then learn to see ourselves in a larger context of meaning. To give birth, to nourish and sustain that new life—all this is an act of self-spending that can be compared only to a gift. It implies a certain fundamental generosity, a willingness to expend one's energies and one's person in nourishing and sustaining the next generation. And it may not be easy to decide why or how that should be done if we are too busy pondering what we should do for ourselves.

If the family ought to be this sort of community, one that demands a great deal of us, why might we want or need it? Why undertake the effort it involves? There is a social and theological case to be made for commitment to the family, and we can begin with the lesser and move toward the greater. Renewal of the species and rearing of the next generation might, of course, take place apart from anything remotely resembling the family. That is a very old idea. Plato had Socrates propose it when constructing the ideal city in the *Republic*. He suggests that by making kinship universal we could eliminate the divisive passions that ordinary family preference involves. In our setting, we could establish a universal system of day-care centers to which children were given at birth and in which everyone had a hand in the care of all children—and in this way begin to approximate Socrates' proposal. If, however, the family is the sort of community I have described, doing this would make war on the elements written very deeply into our nature. And no doubt Aristotle had something like that in mind when he suggested that Socrates' proposal would do more than combat divisive passion; it might also dilute a sense of concern and responsibility for those who come after us.

We can expand a little upon that claim. A parent is not simply a public functionary charged with looking after a certain number of children. The special attachment that characterizes the parent-child bond serves, at its best, as a kind of guarantee of love—almost an analogue to divine grace. (That it does not always work this way indicates only that it is no more than an analogue, and that quite often we are not at our best.) The child is loved unconditionally, *for no particular reason*. I am to love my children not because they are especially talented or qualified in one way or another, but simply because they have been given to me and placed into my care. And only such love, founded on no particular quality or attribute, can offer something approaching unconditional acceptance.

If I love my son because he plays the piano well, or my daughter because she executes the pick-and-roll with precision, if that is the ground of my special attachment, then it is subject to change. There can be little certainty that my commitment will endure; for it is likely that others will play both piano and basketball better. But when, by contrast, parental love is grounded in the facts of biological and historical bonding, the child lives in a setting offering the kind of acceptance human beings need in order themselves

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to become capable of adult commitment—a setting in which individuals who are separate but connected can grow and flourish. Thus, Michael Walzer has perceptively commented that

> one might . . . liberate women from childbirth as well as parents from child care, by cloning the next generation, . . . or by purchasing babies from underdeveloped countries. This is not the redistribution but the abolition of parental love, and I suspect that it would quickly produce a race of men and women incapable even of the commitment required for an affair.

At least this much can be said about the social purpose of the family among our earthly communities.

But from a Christian perspective our commitment to the family cannot and ought not be grounded simply in its importance for our common life. However treasured and significant, this remains only penultimate. The family is also something more than a basic social unit. It is a sphere in which God is at work on us, shaping and molding us, that we may become people who genuinely wish to share his life of love. The overarching interpretive rubric within which to understand the spheres of human life—and, for us here, in particular the family—is Augustine's statement, in Book I of *The City of God*, that the servants of God "have no reason to regret even this life of time, for in it they are schooled for eternity." In biblical terms we might cite I John 4:20: "He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." The family is a school of virtue in which God sets before us, day after day, one person or a few persons whom we are to love. This is the *paideia* of the heavenly Father at work upon both children and parents, building upon the love that comes naturally to us in our families, but transforming it also into the image of his own love. Here he begins to turn us into people who have learned to love and who will want to live with him in a community of love.

Such straightforwardly religious talk may, of course, seem alien to the common life of our society, and no doubt it is to some degree. Yet, it may be precisely the language for which we are searching. We tend to make of the family both too much and too little. Too much—as parents seek to reproduce themselves in their children, feverishly seek children "of their own," and try as much as possible to protect those children from all experience of suffering and sacrifice. In doing this we ask of the family—which remains, after all, only a penultimate sphere of life—more than it can give, and we place upon it expectations that must inevitably be disappointed. Too little—in that we can so seldom discover in the family anything more than an arena for our personal fulfillment, in that we fail to see it as a community that ought to transmit a way of life. What we really need is language that can affirm the importance of the family as biological and historical community without depriving that bond of a still greater *telos*. Perhaps we would do well to learn from Augustine to think of the family as a school of virtue, or from I John of the family as a sphere in which we learn the meaning of commitment to a few and begin to learn the steps of the greater dance of love. And surely, if Christian churches have any distinctive insight to offer, any picture to paint of what the family might be, it is this.

The Trinitarian shape of Christian faith affirms that God is love. From eternity the Father begets the Son—that is, offers his life, all that he is and has, to the Son. Such self-giving begets a Son eternally willing to receive life with joy and humility, and to offer that life back to the One who gives it. The self-giving of the Father evokes a like response from the Son; it gives rise to a mutuality in love, the bond of love uniting Father and Son, which is the Spirit. As a school of virtue for both parents and children, the family exists to draw us into the love of this God.

Husbands and wives learn that in giving themselves fully to each other they forge a mutual bond of love that can be fruitful and creative. Mothers and fathers learn that in struggling with the demands of nurturing their children they develop a love that seeks the good of those children, not simply the good that parents alone can bestow. Parents learn that, in setting aside their own craving for fulfillment and giving themselves over to their parental functions, they can, in fact, become someone—a someone who has a history that individuates. Children learn to flourish in a context in which they are loved unconditionally and are encouraged to think of themselves as dependent, as grateful recipients of a gift to which they have no rightful claim.

To be sure, at their best our families may only approach this ideal, and no doubt they often fall very short of it. But perhaps they come closer than we think more often than we think. Perhaps what they need is a word the churches might supply: a word that interprets the bond of parents and children in this light and gives to us all a renewed sense of what it means to live within a family. FT

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# Abortion and the Neutral State

***Robert P. Hunt***

The search for the American political mainstream is a risky enterprise. It can be a salutary and enlightening exercise when it causes us to reflect upon the fundamental principles and purposes that define the American experiment in self-government. But it can also lead to disastrous consequences if the American public becomes inattentive and allows that search to be conducted by persons who have a vested interest in redefining, and perhaps even distorting, the "mainstream" of American political and constitutional thought.

We experienced these latter consequences three years ago when a number of left-liberal scholars, politicians, and pundits attempted to read Judge Robert Bork out of the American political and constitutional mainstream. Senators Biden, Metzenbaum, and Kennedy, relying in part upon the "expertise" of the noted Harvard legal scholar Laurence Tribe, fashioned a lengthy laundry list of political and constitutional horrors that would presumably follow upon Bork's elevation to the U.S. Supreme Court. With the assistance of a massive lobbying effort on the part of liberal interest groups, Bork's detractors prevailed and Judge Bork did not obtain the position for which he was so eminently qualified.

Three years have passed and Bork is still being pummeled by Tribe and other like-minded scholars. A particularly interesting example of Tribe-like constitutional speculation is John Arthur's *The Unfinished Constitution: Philosophy and Constitutional Practice* (1989). Arthur's book is of interest primarily because it is indicative of a larger and more audacious attempt to redefine the American political mainstream. My purpose, therefore, is not to provide a systematic critique of the book, but rather to comment on two of its more interesting aspects, namely: (1) its argument that the Federalists, in writing the Constitution, were actually defending the principle of the "neutral" state, and (2) its attempt to apply "neutral state" principles to the issues of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia. An analysis of these themes will allow us to see what threadbare constitutional garments are worn by those prochoice advocates who would like to stack the deck against prolifers by invoking the dubious principle of governmental neutrality.

An answer to the problem of national self-definition in America is provided by the advocates of the "neutral" state. These persons believe that any attempt by government to promote a particular conception of the good life is, given the pluralistic nature of American society, imprudent at best. At worst, it is a violation of the principles upon which sound and just government is based.

Defenders of the "neutral" state can be found on both the right and left wings of American politics. Espousing a libertarian view of neutrality in order to justify a free market economic system, Robert Nozick contends that government "scrupulously must be neutral between its citizens." Ronald Dworkin, a welfare-state liberal and constitutional scholar, also endorses the principle of neutrality, claiming that "government must be neutral on what might be called the question of the good life." Because "each person has a more-or-less articulate conception of what gives value to life," a government does not treat each person with equal respect and dignity if it prefers one conception of the good life to another.

The argument that there is no single correct perception of what is proper and good for man leads, paradoxically, to the conclusion that there *is* a proper and good political regime—a regime based on the equal recognition of rights. Moral autonomy becomes the be-all and end-all of our constitutional regime. Our Constitution, on this view, promotes an individualism that is ultimately indifferent to the

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object of choice because it is choice alone, and the dignity of making choices, that separates man from other forms of existence. In short, Dworkin, Nozick, and other defenders of the neutral state tend to reify the concept of the autonomous self. Politics cannot be used to "impose" one's own conception of the good on other autonomous persons.

That such a viewpoint may be propounded freely in our republic is beyond cavil. But to claim that such a viewpoint is what the Framers had in mind when they wrote the Constitution in 1787 is, as Justice Byron White noted in another context, "at best facetious." And yet this is precisely what John Arthur attempts to prove in *The Unfinished Constitution*. If it can be shown, after all, that the founding Federalists were opposed to any government that promoted a particular conception of the good life, might we not then say that Laurence Tribe's and Eleanor Smeal's defense of "reproductive freedom" as a constitutional right is consistent with the principles of Hamilton, Madison, and Jay? Arthur undertakes a daunting task and the battle for the constitutional mainstream is joined.

Arthur reveals his jurisprudential worldview by joining in the denunciation of Robert Bork as not being "in the mainstream of American legal and political culture," as being in fact "on the fringe" of legitimate constitutional interpretation. Bork, Arthur contends, is far afield precisely because he grounds his jurisprudence in a moral skepticism and positivism that denies "claims of natural rights" as discovered, for example, in "Jefferson's ringing endorsement of self-evident rights in the Declaration of Independence and the Federalists' insistence on separation of powers and the adoption of the Bill of Rights." If our constitutional republic stands for anything, Arthur suggests, it most certainly stands for individual rights so conceived. (It is curious that Arthur does not extend his denunciation to Justices Holmes and Black, for they, like Bork, would also be loath to engage in a jurisprudence grounded in abstract, non-textual claims of natural rights. Perhaps Arthur's omission is due to the fact that Holmes and Black were on the "correct" side of the moral *Zeitgeist* in most cases.)

Given that the Constitution is grounded in a recognition of individual rights—rights which must be reinterpreted due to the document's "exceedingly vague" language—Arthur quickly dismisses the jurisprudence of original intent. Whatever the Framers had in mind, it was not a method of constitutional interpretation grounded in moral skepticism. Having cast the miscreants ashore, Arthur begins to define his political and constitutional mainstream.

The mainstream has, according to Arthur, two currents that can be traced back to the debates at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. The republicans (*i.e.*, the reluctant supporters and anti-Federalist opponents of the new Constitution) supported a tradition of political thought that wanted to see government "make of its citizens the best people they are capable of becoming," to inculcate moral virtue as it was defined by each concrete political community. In short, the republican vision was a communitarian vision. Since the "republican" tradition did not prevail among a majority of convention delegates, Arthur suggests that we must look elsewhere to find the main current of American political thought. He himself finds it in a "federalist" position that is eerily reminiscent of Dworkin's (or Nozick's) neutral state.

The Federalists, according to Arthur, assumed that "people . . . are often ruled by passion and self-interest rather than by respect for others' rights," that "society is composed of diverse, pluralistic factions," and that "government should strive to remain neutral with respect to society's various competing factions." For Arthur, and for others who adopt his interpretation of the Federalists' design, the Framers were "anti-majoritarian." They recognized the danger that "the majority faction" might attempt to impose its own view of the good and thus undermine each individual's pursuit of his own version of happiness. Their solution: an extended republic in which no one interest or faction could dominate, thus ensuring that "individuals should be left free to pursue their own conception of the good life by a government that aspires to remain neutral" regarding those conceptions.

The only problem with this interpretation of the Framers' vision is that it is wrong. Or, to put the matter in more circumspect Arthurian language, it neither "fit[s] well with the material" nor does "charity" to the Framers' design. Arthur is wrong because of the radically anti-majoritarian bias of his argument—a bias not shared by the Framers because the Framers in general, and Madison in particular, defined "factions" differently from the way in which Arthur defines the term.

Madison, in *Federalist* No. 10, defined a faction as "a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." Arthur, for little apparent reason, tends to read into this definition of "faction" a commitment to individual moral autonomy. On this reading, I have a "right" to pursue my own conception of happiness, and "the permanent and aggregate interests of the community" are coequal with the protection of this liberty right and the promotion of economic prosperity. A "faction" is any group that attempts to "impose" its own conception of the good on others, and government must be so organized as to prevent any majority or minority faction from doing that.

Thus, the "Federalists'" anti-majoritarian bias, and their commitment to neutrality between competing conceptions of the good life, lays the groundwork for

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a Supreme Court whose commitment to such vague notions as "libertarian dignity under law" makes it the supreme umpire in American life. When critics complain that a particular decision has no basis in the text of the Constitution, Arthur and his friends can invoke this anti-majoritarianism to meet the objection. After all, the Court is only being neutral between preferences; it is certainly not invoking any conception of the political good. Isn't that what pluralism is all about?

Not really. To engage in such formalistic rhetoric is to ignore the substantive conception of human nature (and of a natural moral law) that informed the political thought of both Federalists and anti-Federalists. The Framers were not Tribean individualists, nor were they necessarily anti-majoritarian. While it would be misleading to maintain that the Framers were communitarians who believed that government could resolve all societal problems and eliminate all vices in pursuing the good life, it is simply wrong to assume, as Arthur does, that the Framers wanted to prevent political majorities from "imposing" any view of the good life at all.

Madison's *Federalist* No. 10 should be seen not as a defense of radical individualism against moral majoritarianism but as a defense of republican self-government. And a republican form of government makes it less likely that factional interests—that is, those groups that defend substantively wrongful and improper public policies—will be able to exercise their plans of oppression against the *legitimate* rights or interests of the community in general and the individual in particular. A faction, for Madison, is defined not by how much it would encroach upon the autonomous individual but by its dedication to moral and political principles inimical to sound and just governance.

In short, the Constitution is not an anti-majoritarian document. The Framers were not intent upon thwarting democratic self-governance. Rather, they wanted to ensure that the political majority governed justly. And the best way to ensure that they governed justly was, as Willmoore Kendall noted, to leave

> the "people" of the new nation organized in a particular way, in constituencies which would return senators and congressmen, and by inculcating in that people a constitutional morality that would make of the relevant elections a quest for the "virtuous" men . . . [who] were to *deliberate* about such problems as seemed to them to require attention and, off at the end, make decisions by majority vote.

While an extended republic was not absolutely immune to the dangers of factionalism, it was more likely to secure the permanent and aggregate interests of the community than any alternative system. The political constitution, according to Madison, would aim at obtaining for rulers "men who possess most wisdom to discern and most virtue to pursue, the common good of the society." To interpret that "common good" in "neutral," individualistic terms, or to believe that the best representative body is a group of nine unelected judges who impose such neutrality on everybody because of their latest excursion into Professor Tribe's political philosophy, is to distort the Constitution beyond recognition.

If Arthur's interpretation of Federalist thought as a defense of the neutral state is, to employ his own terminology, uncharitable, his application of "neutralist" principles to the issues of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia is unbelievable.

Arthur begins his discussion of these moral issues by admitting that "rather than realizing the federalist ideal of neutrality, the Court in *Roe* seems to commit itself to the position that the pre-viable fetus is not a living person and has no rights"—a point made by Justice Antonin Scalia during oral argument in the *Webster* case. Arthur also admits that "the law cannot avoid a commitment on this basic moral issue, the status of a fetus." The reader begins to conclude that Arthur is, in fact, admitting that when one adopts a "prochoice" position on abortion, one is indeed taking sides and not being neutral.

The reader's conclusion is premature. Arthur tries to extricate himself from this dilemma through an elaborate feat of linguistic legerdemain. He argues that one can take sides and be neutral at one and the same time—by distinguishing between "strong" and "weak" neutrality. Strong neutrality, according to Arthur, "demands that government not take a stand on any moral issue." Such neutrality is impossible given the need for government to "define the political rights of citizens and establish the tax, contract, and property laws forming the background against which citizens pursue their own ends." Weak neutrality, however, "requires only that government not advocate or criticize any particular conception of the good." The "Federalist" perspective demands only weak neutrality because it begins with a commitment to the notion of individual rights, to the idea that each individual has both the right to pursue his own conception of the good and the duty to recognize the same right as accruing to other individuals. In short, weak neutrality allows citizens to "pursue their own ends" and does not advocate any particular conception of the good.

Francis Canavan has aptly pointed out the absurdity of ascribing the word "neutrality" to the latter position, and it is worthwhile to quote him at some length:

> . . . all forms of liberalism, even the most statist, regard the ideal situation as one in which the individual freely—and, of course, intelligently—

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> sets norms for himself. If regulation is necessary, as most liberals concede and even insist that it is, its ultimate justification is that it contributes to the individual's freedom to shape his life as he will.
>
> Normlessness, however, turns out to be itself a norm. It is a steady choice of individual freedom over any other human or social good that conflicts with it, an unrelenting subordination of all allegedly objective goods to the subjective good of individual preference. Such a policy does not merely set individuals free to shape their own lives. It necessarily sets norms for a whole society, creates an environment in which everyone has to live, and exerts a powerful influence on social institutions.

Applying Canavan's argument, we begin to see that Arthur's (and other neutralists') refusal to impose any conception of the good is itself dependent on a particular conception of the good—a radically individualistic conception grounded in each individual's "moral autonomy"—which Arthur is willing to impose on everyone by giving it a constitutional imprimatur. To describe such a worldview as "neutral" in any sense—be it strong or weak—is wholly unjustifiable.

Furthermore, even if we assume, as Arthur does, that a Federalist regime ought to commit itself morally to a defense of individual rights, why does the right to choose take precedence over the right to life of the unborn? By what criteria do we absolutize the principle of autonomy independent of the object chosen—even when that choice entails the destruction of innocent human life?

To Arthur's credit, he attempts to deal with this question. To his discredit, he deals with it in such a manner as to leave unprotected not only the unborn, but also those who "do not have the capacities necessary to qualify as a person." What, you might ask, are the capacities that make a human being also qualify as a person, as a distinct human being who also possesses the right to life? (Note that Arthur readily admits that "whether something is a living human is not the same as its being a person, nor is it necessary that persons also be human.") Personhood, according to Arthur, "is a psychological idea, requiring us to weigh an organism's mental characteristics." Thus, for Arthur, only those human beings that display certain mental characteristics are endowed with the right to life. Citing Michael Tooley, he contends that these mental characteristics primarily involve "the capacity to desire the thing to which he or she has the right." We might fairly conclude that "early infanticide of defective newborns," or even the mercy killing of poor old Aunt Alice who no longer has the capacity to desire to live, is perfectly legitimate. Moreover, according to Arthur, such a position is consistent with the Federalist's constitutional perspective. Arthur's "Federalist" would provide constitutional protection for those who would commit infanticide or euthanasia under the rubric of governmental neutrality.

Arthur's "Federalist" perspective is, at best, intellectually and morally questionable. For Arthur, a human being has no intrinsic worth or dignity. He only achieves dignity, and obtains rights, when he becomes a person. And he ceases to be a person when he loses the capacity to choose. The principle of the morally autonomous self is elevated to such a height that only those persons who are able to choose are deserving of constitutional protection. The non-autonomous humans seem to be constitutionally insignificant, to be disposed of at will by those human beings who are able to assert their personal autonomy. The neutral state can maintain its neutrality by giving free rein to such choices.

We are justified in concluding that Arthur's neutral state is not neutral at all. Rather, it would impose upon everyone a ruthless orthodoxy that subjects unborn and infirm human beings to the capricious whims of those who believe themselves to be superior because of their ability to exert their will, to realize their autonomous selfhood. In Arthur's thought, we witness one of the last stages in the intellectual decline of contemporary liberalism—a decline that bears monstrous political fruits. Francis Canavan's cautionary words regarding these fruits are worth heeding, lest we become inattentive or indifferent and thereby abandon our constitutional and moral heritage to this new "mainstream" of political thought. Says Canavan:

> A pluralist society must perforce strive to be neutral about many things that concern its divided citizens. But it cannot be neutral about all of them. If it tries or pretends to be neutral about certain issues, the pluralist game becomes a shell game by which people are tricked into consenting to changes in basic social standards and institutions on the pretense that nothing more is asked of them than respect for the rights of individuals. Much more, however, is involved: on the fundamental issues of social life, one side or the other always wins.

We ought to recognize that a "shell game" is being played on us by the defenders of the "neutral" state, but the stakes are much higher than in any ordinary game of three-card Monte. Our nation's unborn and infirm stand to lose more than pocket cash if the gamesters are successful. FT

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*Review Essay*

# The Real John Courtney Murray

***Keith J. Pavlischek***

THE SEARCH FOR AN AMERICAN PUBLIC THEOLOGY: THE CONTRIBUTION OF JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY. By ROBERT W. MCELROY. *Paulist Press. 216 pp. $10.95 paper.*

THE ETHICS OF DISCOURSE: THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY. By J. LEON HOOPER. *Georgetown University Press. 283 pp. $17.95 cloth; $10.95 paper.*

William Lee Miller has called John Courtney Murray "the most important American Catholic thinker of the twentieth century." It is no surprise, then, that there is a continuing interest in Murray's understanding of the relation between theological conviction and public life. It is perhaps also no surprise that this interest should involve heated struggles among Catholics of diverse political and ideological persuasions to claim Murray's mantle. Two recent books on Murray provide a useful occasion for an analysis of the issues at stake in the quest for the historical Murray.

Both of these books make extensive use of unpublished material and thus contribute to a more complete understanding of Murray and his contribution to the discussion of the place of religion in American public life. Those unfamiliar with Murray would do well to begin with Robert McElroy's readable introduction to the man and his work. McElroy quotes his subject liberally and is for the most part content to let Murray speak for himself. The book nicely captures Murray's wit and polemical dexterity and serves all in all as perhaps the best available starting place for the study of Murray's ideas.

J. Leon Hooper's book, on the other hand, is a reworked doctoral dissertation. While it is undoubtedly the most comprehensive and detailed exposition of Murray's writings available, the extent to which it will be found valuable will depend largely on the extent to which one finds plausible the hermeneutical grid through which Hooper reads Murray. For reasons that will be explained shortly, I find Hooper's central thesis—that Murray's work was significantly influenced by the work of Bernard Lonergan—to be implausible.

McElroy paints the more familiar portrait of Murray as a public theologian rooted in the Thomist tradition. Murray was deeply disturbed with an increasingly secular culture and society, and he sought to create a public theology that would halt "the secularist drift" of modernity. The tone of the book is set in the opening chapter, where McElroy tells us that Murray was far from sanguine about the cultural ethos of the twentieth century. "One of the most consistent and compelling themes in Murray's writings," he says, "is the conviction that the modern world faced a moral and social crisis of immense proportions—a crisis that dwarfed the threats to humanity which had been posed in earlier ages." In succeeding chapters, McElroy lays out Murray's elaboration of the problems and his proposals for renewal and reconstruction in the cultural, political, and international orders. A concluding chapter—"The Life-Work of John Courtney Murray: Foundations for an American Public Theology?"—is a nicely nuanced "what would Murray say now?" overview that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of Murray's thought for contemporary social, economic, and political problems. In his treatment, McElroy basically tries to split the difference between Catholic neoconservatives and liberals who hope to appropriate Murray for their own political agendas.

Hooper paints a significantly different portrait. While McElroy insists that "the over-arching theme of Murray's life-work was the conviction that all human values must be subjected to transcendent truth," Hooper argues that this was an immature conviction that Murray outgrew with the help of Bernard Lonergan. Hooper does admit that for most of his career Murray "clung to the notion of non-contingency of theological affirmations and of the church's self-understanding," but he suggests that by the end of his life, with the help of Lonergan, Murray had come to "admit the contingency of the theological propositions that guided church action and thought."

According to Hooper, Murray's early thinking was characterized by an ethical individualism that "betrayed the social dimensions of his faith." And because Murray assumed a "timelessness to the principles which were to govern conscience," he was also an ethical legalist. Largely as a result of this individualism and legalism, Murray's early polemics against liberal Protestant and secularist notions of the separation of church and state, and their corresponding justifica-

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tions of religious liberty, were, according to Hooper, "immoral." He had yet to learn the "ethics of discourse."

Not until sometime after Vatican II, according to Hooper, did Murray arrive at a "new consciousness" which was "the result of a final break with elements of his earlier epistemological and ecclesiological theories that blocked what might be called a social spirituality—a conscious recognition of, and interaction with, an historical God." Murray finally came to realize that "the church's understanding of itself as a timeless embodiment of Christian truth . . . must give way to a recognition of itself as principally and primarily a community of ongoing historical inquiry and of transforming love." In short, Murray outgrew his old Thomistic natural law doctrines and came to recognize "the contingency of the theological propositions that guided church thought and action."

Someone unfamiliar with Murray's work but acquainted with the classic typology of H. Richard Niebuhr might well conclude that McElroy's Murray would represent a Christ the Transformer of Culture perspective while Hooper's Murray would represent a Christ of Culture position. Which raises the question: How can we account for these radically divergent interpretations of Murray?

With respect to the narrower question of McElroy's Murray versus Hooper's Murray, the answer is specified, along lines I have already indicated, in a note by McElroy where he says of Hooper's book that it is "flawed by its erroneous central thesis that Murray was dramatically influenced by the work of Bernard Lonergan."

Hooper does, I think, establish that Murray was intimately familiar with Lonergan's work and that at times he resorted to some of Lonergan's terminology, particularly his notion of "historical consciousness"—a theory which, according to Hooper, advanced the notion of the contingency of all human judgments. But he does not establish that Murray was, as McElroy puts it, "dramatically influenced" by Lonergan, at least not sufficiently to outweigh other influences such as Eric Voegelin, J. L. Talmon, Henri de Lubac, Jacques Maritain, and, ultimately, St. Thomas. And the extent to which he *was* influenced by Lonergan certainly does not justify the rather bold claims Hooper makes for the mature Murray.

Actually, Hooper himself seems rather ambiguous about the extent to which Murray was influenced by Lonergan's notion of "historical consciousness." As early as 1964, in a noted article on "The Problem of Religious Freedom," Murray was making a distinction—one he clearly did get from Lonergan—between classicism and historical consciousness. However, Hooper concedes that "it was only about 1966 that Murray began to catch on to Lonergan's notion of 'historical consciousness' as a distinct differentiation on human understanding, a new perspective on the contingent and social nature of all human truth claims." Even then, we are told, an article published in 1967, the year of his death, indicated that Murray "did not have complete control" over Lonergan's notion because he was willing to assert there that "Leo XIII was a man of 'historical consciousness.' "

This is not a minor ambiguity in Hooper's thesis. If Murray, as late as 1967, was willing to call Leo XIII, of all people, a man of "historical consciousness," then it would seem that anybody could fit the bill, perhaps even those Catholic traditionalists whom Murray opposed at the Second Vatican Council. But that would be nonsense. How is it, then, that Murray could ascribe the term to Leo and at the same time deny it to those traditionalists who advanced Leo's position at the Council?

The answer turns on Murray's understanding of Leo's church-state theory. In brief, Murray thought that Leo could plausibly be considered a man of "historical consciousness" because of the historically sensitive way in which he advocated and defended the Church's thesis-hypothesis theory. That theory held that the state in principle (thesis) was obliged to recognize the Catholic Church as the true Church and to prescribe worship of God according to the rites of the Catholic Church. Moreover, in principle the state had the right and duty to suppress the public expression of false religion. However, in practice (hypothesis) non-establishment of the Catholic Church and toleration of false religions was permitted when suppression would cause more harm than good. That Murray would claim that Leo, a staunch champion of this doctrine, warranted being called a man of "historical consciousness" is quite remarkable, for it was the thesis-hypothesis doctrine that Murray opposed for most of his intellectual life.

Now, instead of opting for the more plausible claim that Murray's use of the term "historical consciousness" might be in line with a traditional Thomistic notion of prudence—the virtue of applying immutable first principles to historically variant situations—Hooper chose to ascribe to him a Lonerganian notion of historical consciousness and then declare it "underdeveloped."

However, the more reasonable interpretation is that Murray believed that Leo's church-state theory could be defended as a prudential judgment that applied trans-temporal principles to a unique historical situation that no longer held. This was the crux of a series of lengthy articles Murray had written on Leo XIII in the mid-1950s. Since the conditions that Leo had faced in nineteenth-century Europe—notably mass illiteracy and tendencies toward totalitarian versions of democracy—no longer obtained, the so-called "ideal" of a confessional state (the "thesis") was no longer applicable.

Murray's understanding of Leo's church-state theory and his own constructive religious liberty argument

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are not without their problems. But the significant point here is that Murray could easily enough agree with Leo that some theological and moral affirmations are not historically contingent and still take seriously the notion of historical development and even an idea such as "historical consciousness." But, of course, he would not necessarily mean by the term what Hooper or Lonergan do.

If Murray's use of Lonergan's notion of "historical consciousness" is undeveloped as late as 1967, one might fairly wonder whether Murray really came to believe that "one cannot (and should not) aprioristically claim the eternal validity of any political philosophy or rights theory, or, for that matter, of any ethical theory regarding social reality, familial structuring, common moral affirmations, or even the principles of justice themselves."

Consider, by way of argument, the following moral judgments.

1. Torturing children for fun is wrong.
2. Monogamy is right and polygamy is wrong.
3. Coercing persons into making a public religious confession is wrong.

It would be reasonable to understand (1) as "a common moral affirmation," (2) as a statement about "a form of familial structuring," and (3) as a part of a rights theory or a principle of justice. To take seriously Hooper's rather bold claim, we would have to believe that the "mature" Murray would be perfectly willing to consider these historically relative and contingent propositions. The problem is that there is good evidence that Murray would have considered each of these to be non-contingent either on the basis of natural law or on the basis of revealed truth.

Take #3, for instance. It would be fair to say that this is a proposition that Murray took to be immutably true. It is, incidentally, also a proposition taken to be immutably true even by those Catholic defenders of the thesis-hypothesis doctrine whom Murray opposed throughout his life. For both Murray and his traditionalist contemporaries, the conscience ought never be coerced, although for the traditionalists this did not imply that the public expression of heresy or a false religion could not be proscribed for the common good should Roman Catholics have hegemony within a particular polity.

If we are to take seriously Hooper's assertions that Murray grew into a stance that took all theological and moral claims to be socially and historically relative, it would seem that Murray could at most claim that coercing persons into making a public religious confession would only be contingently wrong. If a society came to believe that it was not wrong to coerce persons into making public religious confessions against their will (thus making the denial of #3 a "common moral affirmation"), then it would seem that Murray would have to conclude that proposition #3 is true if and only if there is societal consensus on the matter. To borrow a phrase from Richard Rorty, Murray would have to concede that #3 is true if, and only if, his peers let him get away with saying it. Murray would be, in other words, a full-blown relativist or historicist.

So has Murray, according to Hooper, emerged into a full-blown relativist? Well, not quite. "If Murray did indeed relativize all human social judgments of moral value . . . he did not, in his own understanding, abandon any rational discussion of social and ethical values or the possibility of invariance in general or specific moral judgments from one age to the next." But which is it? Did Murray (1) relativize all social judgments of moral value, or (2) affirm the possibility of invariance in moral judgments? Hooper seems to think that with the help of Lonergan's notion of the "virtually unconditioned," Murray found some middle ground and could thus avoid moral and religious relativism. But it is less than clear how this is possible, unless it is the *Zeitgeist* (rather than, say, the will of God or the moral law) that makes a moral judgment only virtually, rather than absolutely, unconditioned.

And this, not surprisingly, is what Hooper implies. According to Hooper, Murray eventually came to realize that "the very religious truths by which the church understands itself and God are *dependent* on the emergence of insights and perspectives as these arise in the course of historical development" (emphasis added). This comes perilously close to saying that the Church dances to the tune of the secular *Zeitgeist*. In that case, Murray would emerge as a nineteenth-century liberal Protestant, a considerable about-face for someone who gained his reputation as a theologian who fought liberals and secularists in an attempt to "reverse the secularist drift."

Leaving aside the narrower question concerning the extent to which Murray was influenced by Lonergan, we might ask a broader question. How could it be possible for Catholic scholars intimately familiar with Murray's work to interpret Murray in such radically diverse ways? McElroy suggests an answer, to which I propose an addendum.

One of the most interesting elements of the leading public theologies written over the last decade, McElroy writes, "is that despite their sectarian and ideological diversity, they have almost uniformly drawn many of their central insights from the works of John Courtney Murray." From the liberal Catholicism of John Coleman and Richard McBrien, and we may now add Hooper, to the conservative Catholicism of Michael Novak, one finds a deep appreciation for the work of Murray.

McElroy credits this largely to the depth and breadth of Murray's life work. He cites Robin Lovin's suggestion that public theologians fall in three general categories—those who stress the ordering function of religion in society, those who stress that religion can undergird principles of freedom in society, and those

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who argue that religion provides the possibility for social justice. The enduring attractiveness of Murray's work is that it contains elements of all these categories. Murray's work, according to McElroy, appeals to public theologians from a diversity of ideological perspectives because he integrated these functions in a penetrating, non-superficial manner. But this also means that someone intent on highlighting one aspect of his thought can easily enough do so at the expense of others.

To some extent this can be said of every serious thinker. But it is particularly true of Murray because of a characteristic of his work that is often overlooked. As McElroy puts it, "While Murray was always a systematic thinker he was not a systematic writer." Murray, he observes, never brought together his writings on the nature of the state and politics in one single place. Even *We Hold These Truths,* a book that Murray considered merely a "primer on pluralism," was, for the most part, a compilation of earlier articles. McElroy perceptively notes that although Murray could easily have written a comprehensive treatise on the subject, his work on the state and government only appears in derivative fashion as it applied to religious liberty and within the context of an attempt to construct a public theology that would contribute to the renewal of American society.

McElroy's observations are right on target. But what needs to be added is that this places a significant burden on the reader intent on deciphering Murray's own constructive position. Virtually everything Murray had to say, particularly on the topic of religious liberty, must be placed within the historical situation that drove him to address the topic in the first place.

To properly understand Murray, then, one must appreciate the extent to which his thought in general and his theory of religious liberty in particular developed within a fairly well-defined polemical context. The latter emerged out of his struggles with both Catholic defenders of the traditional thesis-hypothesis tradition, on the one hand, and liberal Protestant and secularist defenses of religious liberty grounded in a strict separation of church and state, on the other.

Murray's victory against the advocates of the thesis-hypothesis doctrine at Vatican II should not obscure the fact that he was never happy with liberal Protestant justifications of religious liberty, let alone secularist ones. To do justice to Murray's work, one must carefully consider his quarrel with liberal Protestants and secularists as well as with traditionalist Catholics. And what must be kept in mind is that his rejection of one does not imply the affirmation of the other, although Murray can be and often has been selectively cited and made to look as if he did not properly distance himself from either.

Because Hooper does not sufficiently appreciate Murray's arguments against liberal Protestants and secularists, he tends to read Murray as a Thomist shifting his ground in their direction. To a degree, the opposite can be said of McElroy. Because he does not do justice to Murray's quarrel with traditionalist Catholics, and in fact fails to account for the extent to which his own constructive position emerged out of a double-sided polemic, he tends to downplay the "progressive" side of Murray.

There are, I think, serious lacunae and major ambiguities in Murray's position on religious liberty as well as in his "public theology." But the first step toward reading him correctly is understanding his *sitz im leben* as a Catholic Christian satisfied neither with the traditionalist Catholic theory of church and state nor with what he took to be the liberal Protestant acquiescence in the "secularist drift." If we keep this situation in mind, we will resist the temptation to create a Murray simply after our own image. ☐

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***Report***

# Religion and the New South Africa

***Dean C. Curry***

Since Nelson Mandela's release from prison, the prospects for peaceful change in South Africa have seemingly improved. Whether those prospects are realized, and whether South Africa will join the family of democratic nations, will depend in important ways on a factor almost always overlooked by media and academic pundits: namely, religion.

Throughout South Africa's three centuries of modern history, religion has played a major role in shaping the contours of all areas of South African life. During the formative years of Dutch influence in the late seventeenth century, the religion of the Reformed Church was given special protection as the vehicle through which the Afrikaner identity was forged. Nearly 150 years later, the Boer Voortrekkers attributed their survival against the Zulu to the direct intervention of God. In the eyes of the Afrikaners, their 1838 vow at Blood River established an immutable covenant between God and the chosen Boer race.

By 1881, the Afrikaner national identity was again threatened, this time by the imperialistic—British—culture of "liquor, lucre, and redcoats." In response, the defense of the Afrikaner way of life found sustenance in the theological teachings of the Dutch neo-Calvinist, Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper's theology of "sphere sovereignty" provided a ready-made biblical doctrine providing sanction for an Afrikaner nation. When Boer nationalism finally emerged victorious in the election of 1948, the Dutch Reformed Church was the inseparable companion of the ruling National Party. Its political role was unambiguous: to provide theological justification for apartheid.

It was not only Afrikaner nationalism, however, that found sustenance in religion. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, a black religious movement known as Ethiopianism, with roots in the American-founded African Methodist Episcopal Church, represented one of the first organized expressions of black South African nationalism. And, after the white South African government enacted the 1913 Natives Land Act establishing the principal of territorial segregation based on race, indigenous black independent churches rose up in often violent protest.

Clearly, the history of South Africa is the story of the considerable influence of religion. But what about today, and more importantly, tomorrow?

On the eve of what will most certainly be a "new," multiracial South Africa, religion remains a pervasive and powerful social influence. Today, 80 percent of South Africans identify themselves as Christians. In a country with arguably no common national symbols, Christianity is one of the few commitments nearly all South Africans share. Moreover, churches and para-church organizations continue to grow at a spectacular rate, especially independent evangelical and black African indigenous churches. In a phenomenon mimicking recent trends in the United States, the "mainline" churches associated with the South African Council of Churches (SACC)—such as the Anglican, Methodist, and Dutch Reformed—have experienced stagnation and even decline. On the other hand, pentecostally oriented evangelical churches, such as the Johannesburg-based Rhema Church movement, as well as the African indigenous churches, such as the Zion Christian Church (whose worldview is an amalgam of Christian teaching and traditional African religious expression), have experienced an explosion of membership.

The numbers are impressive. It is estimated that nearly 50 percent of all black South Africans and 25 percent of white South Africans now identify with either evangelical or indigenous church groups, and their membership rolls continue to grow. Among the evangelical independent churches (sometimes referred to as New Independent Churches or NICs), it is not unusual to find congregations numbering in the thousands. The African indigenous church gatherings tend to be smaller, but the total number of different African independent church groups has multiplied well beyond 3,000, representing millions of blacks.

In 1990, it is not difficult to locate the religious action in South Africa. While the political activities of the SACC-related churches get most of the media attention—as a result of highly visible, well-traveled clergy—South Africa's independent churches, evangelical and indigenous, are quietly but profoundly altering that country's religious and social landscape.

In contrast to South Africa's vocal patrons of liberation theology (who are largely confined to the intellectual class), most evangelical independent and African indigenous churches eschew radical politics and the transformation of the Christian message into

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a political agenda. Among the African indigenous churches, this orientation arises from an apolitical predisposition; among the evangelical independents, it is a direct product of their theology. Derek Morphew, for example, an evangelical theologian and director of Cape Fellowship Ministries, equates "black theology" (i.e., liberation theology) with the Afrikaner theology used to defend apartheid. Both, says Morphew, "begin with the historical context and reinterpret Scripture accordingly"; therefore, he concludes, both are heretical.

Uncomfortable with a politicized gospel, South Africa's independent evangelical churches are currently struggling to come to grips with what it means to be "in the world, but not of the world." The pietistic, don't-get-involved-in-politics attitude found among evangelicals and fundamentalists elsewhere in the world can certainly be found among South African Christians. Nevertheless, what distinguishes South Africa's new independent evangelical churches is their dual mission of evangelism and racial reconciliation.

Accurately described as theologically conservative, the new independent evangelical churches are racially liberal: they are opposed to apartheid, while advocating and practicing racial harmony. In fact, they are conspicuous in South Africa for their interracial character. A large segment of Rhema's congregation, for example, lives in the black townships of Soweto and Alexandra. And the Rhema church—again, to cite but one example—works in close alliance with several Sowetan evangelical ministries.

The new independent evangelical churches are also conspicuous for their commitment to economic empowerment. Rejecting the revolutionary strategies of liberation theology, these churches see entrepreneurial business activity as an important mechanism for creating a new, post-apartheid South Africa. Their ministries, therefore, directly support a wide range of non-white business activities from T-shirts to rock music.

From a strictly sociological perspective, the growth of South Africa's new evangelical churches is striking; their theological belief system and concomitant social endeavors, fascinating. Beyond this narrow academic interest, however, intellectuals and policy-makers generally dismiss the phenomenon as marginal to the major currents of political change in South Africa. This attitude is derived from the mistaken notion that evangelicalism is uniformly pietistic and otherworldly. That this is not the case is evidenced by the number and intensity of attacks that the religious left has directed against South Africa's evangelicals. Obviously, if the theology and activities of South African evangelicalism were irrelevant, there would be little reason for this extreme hostility.

In 1985, the *Kairos Document*—the now well-known creed of revolutionary orthodoxy—attacked what it called "Church Theology" for its emphasis on social change through the pursuit of nonviolent strategies of reconciliation. Though stridently militant in its condemnation of those who would wish to reconcile "with sin and the devil," the *Kairos Document* did not specifically single out evangelicals for criticism. In 1988, however, South Africa's religious left (often indistinguishable from the SACC mainline) commenced a systematic onslaught against "the real enemy" of South African liberation—"right wing Christian groups," or "RWCGs."

This assault has been conducted in books (e.g., Paul Gifford's *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*), newsletters (e.g., *Crisis News*), on the pages of prestigious academic journals (e.g., *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*), and through the putative research of mainline religious organizations such as the Institute for Contextual Theology.

Not all the salvos, however, have originated within the mainline religious network. In 1986, a group identifying themselves as "Concerned Evangelicals" produced a *Kairos*-inspired "critique of (South African) evangelical theology and practice" entitled *Evangelical Witness in South Africa*. The thesis of the "Concerned Evangelicals" is generally indistinguishable from the "Church Theology" argument of the *Kairos Document*, the major difference being that the "Concerned Evangelicals" explicitly identify the enemy as South African evangelicalism.

With the release of yet another document, *The Road to Damascus*, in Johannesburg last year, South Africa's religious left joined together with other "Third World Christians" to inaugurate a new all-out offensive against right-wing Christianity. "Right-wing Christianity under whatever name," the document states, "is a way of believing that rejects . . . God's revelation . . . in order to support the ideology of the national security state." Consequently, "we (the document's signatories) denounce all forms of right-wing Christianity as heretical."

Just what has South Africa's religious guardians of political orthodoxy all worked up is revealed in *The Road to Damascus*' charge that "right-wing Christians" are guilty of "vicious attacks against liberation theology." Indeed, here is the crux of the matter. Certainly some evangelical groups—the Signpost Research Centre, for example—have engaged the political debate in South Africa in such a way as advertently or inadvertently to lend support to the morally odious system of apartheid. Other church groups, both within the evangelical movement and outside it (the African indigenous churches come to mind), are simply apolitical. For the remainder, such as most of the new independent evangelical churches, their distaste for liberation theology and their understanding of the church's proper role in the public arena derive not from "an ideology of the national security state" but from sincerely held beliefs about theology, politics, and economics.

South Africa's religious left lumps all three groups

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together. Organizations like the Signpost Research Centre and the Gospel Defence League are targeted along with groups like Rhema and World Vision. In reality, these groups are very different, and denouncing them as if they were all cut out of the same racist cloth does nothing more than render transparent the actual agenda of South Africa's religious left. What the left finds distasteful and dangerous about evangelicalism is not just its conservative biblical hermeneutic, but more importantly, its anti-Communism, opposition to socialism, and—conversely—its free market and pro-business orientation. Moreover, some evangelical groups have the audacity, in the words of the religious left's *Crisis News*, to criticize "*prophetic* church leaders such as Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, and Frank Chikane, as well as the World Council of Churches." (Emphasis added.) In short, the peril of evangelicalism resides in its failure to jump on the left's bandwagon and embrace its radical political and economic agenda.

The attitude of the religious left toward South Africa's "right-wing religious groups"—meaning the overwhelming majority of evangelicals—would matter little if the stakes involved nothing more than disputations over arcane issues of theological doctrine. But much more is at stake.

A stable, democratic, and prosperous South Africa will not simply be wished into existence, regardless of the good intentions of the political players. Failed experiments in democracy litter the African continent and beyond. Democracy is much desired, but extremely difficult to possess. Institutional arrangements such as fair elections, a representative legislature, and an independent judiciary are a necessary precondition of democratic government. However, the political institutions of democracy are not sufficient by themselves. Ultimately, the success or failure of the democratic enterprise depends on the values, beliefs, and habits of a nation's people. The empirical evidence of the past thirty years, drawn from countries as geographically diverse as Lebanon, Cyprus, Uganda, and Uruguay, is unambiguous in its lesson that democratic institutions, no matter how carefully designed and implemented, cannot ensure that democracy, once planted, will survive.

The bedrock of viable, stable democracy is a shared understanding of what constitutes the public good; a common language of moral—and, therefore, political—discourse. Without it, democratic government is untenable. In this sense, religion and religious values act as social glue: informing society's understanding of the public good, providing the vocabulary of common moral discourse, and, consequently, restraining and bonding the centrifugal forces of national life.

Herein lies both the danger and promise of religion in South Africa. Religion is inherently a powerful social reality; it is especially so in a country like South Africa where religious beliefs command the allegiance of the vast majority of the population. It is religion's unique quality, as Peter Berger has perceptively noted, to relativize, unmask, and debunk "the pretensions of human power." However, when used in the service of a partisan political agenda, religion often succumbs to the deceit of human power, becoming just another political player and, at worst, part of the problem of human tyranny.

This is precisely what happened when earlier Afrikaner political leaders used racial theology to champion apartheid ideology. And this precisely is what is happening today, albeit by other leaders and in the service of a very different ideology. The political manipulation of Christianity was the design behind the declaration of the National Party's first prime minister, D. F. Malan, that the church's "special calling" was to "guard the [Afrikaner] national interest," and it is the design behind the recent call of South African Communist Party leader Joe Slovo for "every good believer to become a witness for liberation."

The dangers of politicized religion pervade the annals of South African history. Today, religion is being exploited again; and once again, in the service of tyranny. Especially ominous is the intimidation of black evangelicals by the left. In the townships, black evangelicals are under enormous pressure to dissociate themselves from the independent evangelical movement. This tactic is part of the broader strategy of South Africa's left-wing radicals to eliminate by whatever means—including gruesome physical violence—those who do not see things their way. In the parlance of the streets, South Africa's population is divided into two camps: the "liberators" and the "collaborators." In the latter camp are all those who do not accept the left's agenda and its self-proclaimed leadership, a category into which the overwhelming majority of South Africa's evangelicals fit.

At this historic juncture in South Africa's life, it is unlikely that the growing numbers of evangelicals—white and non-white—will steal the headlines from the major political players of the moment: the de Klerks, the Mandelas, the Buthelezis. And yet, after all the talking, negotiating, constitution-building, and voting has taken place, the survival of democracy in a "new" post-apartheid South Africa will arguably depend on those invisible things cultivated and nurtured in the general population by religious faith; those values, beliefs, and habits that represent the soul and lifeblood of a democratic government. FT

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# Books In Review

## The Social History of American Religion

Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People. By Jon Butler. *Harvard University Press. 360 pp. $29.50.*

***Reviewed by*** **Martin E. Marty**

Jon Butler's *Awash in a Sea of Faith* is the most ambitious and successful effort to date to link the social or behavioral history of American religion with that of medieval and reformation Europe. For the past sixty years, ever since the invention of the French *Annales* school of historians, there has been a grand trend of discovery and accent on the part of those who describe the lives of nominally Christian people of the West. The social historians have shown that the official, dogmatic, established, and routinized religion of the churches was a very fragile creation. The *Summas* and cathedrals, the doctrinal formulations and results of councils, be these Protestant or Catholic, reached only some parts of the lives of some inhabitants of Christendom.

The real religion of the people of the Catholic Middle Ages, in these studies, seems to have been an amalgam of sub- or para-Christian frameworks including magic, astrology, the occult, reliance on relics, and the like. The Reformation, as Butler shows in his review of the literature, countered that heretical "supernaturalism" to less effect than Protestants liked to claim. Whereas some Catholic historians have extravagantly begun to claim that the Protestant Reformation was an attempt to Christianize semi-pagan Europe, Butler sees Protestantism as itself being "semi-" reformed, still influenced by the non-Christian supernaturalisms of the times.

Now comes America, the main subject of Yale professor Butler's alluring work. In the face of his predecessor Sydney Ahlstrom, who made much of the Puritan thread in American religion, Butler announces a program that attaches less importance to Puritanism and more to what he calls throughout the book "religious eclecticism." His is the history of the rise to hegemony—to use the fashionable word as he does—of Protestant Christianity between 1680 and 1860. But the ability of the white, male Protestants of certain denominations increasingly to "run the show" did not mean that during those eighteen decades the dominators-on-the-rise successfully purged "religious eclecticism." Both their adherents and the majority who ignored or disdained their appeals kept their attachments to occultism and to other hardly licit supernaturalisms.

American historians, in Butler's implied polemic, have paid too much attention to the official leadership and formulations and thereby missed the people. Butler is interested in seeing how what he calls a "spiritual hothouse" thrived in nominally Protestant America. Having to tell that story leads him to minimize the record of routine religion and maximize the spiritualisms, the magic of early Mormonism, mesmerism, divination, and the like.

Still, his case is compelling, and he makes it with such effect that the reader is likely to go looking with fresh spectacles for traces of this "religious eclecticism" and "spiritual hothouse" effect in contemporary America. One need not look far. Today's successful Evangelicalism, putatively the stronghold of orthodoxies, often finds its congregants lured by "health and wealth" or "signs and wonders" gospels which, in Butler's terms, manipulate the supernatural in hardly conventional forms. If such deviation goes on in the green tree of Evangelicalism, one expects to find devotion to magic and the supernatural even more focused in the larger culture. Words like "New Age" point only to the current version of semi-elite culture's devotion to signs and wonders.

Butler restricts himself to the pre-Civil War story. In the controversy between the historians who say that Virginia and other southern Anglican religion was weak versus those who say it was "not so weak," Butler sides with the "really, really weak" school. He shows how the churches of the New England Puritans represented minority religion even where they were supported by law. For Butler, the American Revolution was largely a secular affair. The Enlightened Founders were rarely orthodox Christians. Church participation was very low at the time of the birth of the nation. There are for Butler, quite properly, no colonial "good old days" when conventional religion of the Protestant or Christian or Judeo-Christian sort snatched America from the jaws of the Enlightenment and gave the nation a Christian birthing.

One of Butler's most provocative chapters has to do with the African "spiritual holocaust," during which time white Christians worked to uproot and proscribe the African religious ethos in slaves before they took pains to offer Christian alternatives. This holocaust, Butler argues, was more determinative of later American religious life than had been the importation of Puritanism and the rise of Evangelicalism in colonial days. Until about 1950 that would have been perceived as a bizarre claim; today it rings true in the dynamics of American pluralism. Whether "holocaust" is the right way to speak of the event, or whether the extirpation of African religious tradition was as extensive as Butler sees it to be, will be de-

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bated for a long time to come.

BUTLER SHOWS HOW in the early national period, as the line of distinction between religion and the civil authorities ("separation of church and state") developed and the citizenry relied ever less on the government for things spiritual or ecclesiastical, church life prospered. Denominations rose to fill the void of dying establishments. Now the churches used persuasion and not coercion to win their way. Yet their leaders were tempted to influence or pass laws to support their claims, sometimes with strong effects.

Jon Butler has made his way as a revisionist. In one famous essay he questioned whether there had ever been a "Second Great Awakening," to use the term most historians found congenial. (When he finishes telling the story of the "Christianizing" of America in this period, he comes close to replicating their story but using a different term.) His choice of the revisionist essay form no doubt attracted, if not enemies, then at least people who have been waiting around to review his own book critically. The risks in the present work are high, but Butler seems to take them with zest. Expect controversy over his minimizing of ties between Evangelicalism and the American Revolution and similar connections being made by many in our time.

Butler tells his story well. Heterodoxy and heresy always make for better stories than does orthodoxy. He will certainly jostle the complacency of any who want to refresh America by appeal to the seventeenth-century Puritan and Anglican founders, or the eighteenth-century Enlightened ones. It was zealous, reformist, often legalistic shapers of a popular American synthesis, as they "sacralized" the landscape on which they built churches, who won hegemony. They helped give us America's "*the* culture." They did so, if I may use Butler's figure, by trying to keep the panes unbroken, the doors on hinges, and the thermostats working in the "spiritual hothouse" they set out to control. They had some effect. America was "Christianized." Their conventional use of power in the elite culture can provide the theme for a different story for a different day. I hope Butler will also put his mind to telling that one.

# Faith and Politics

THE POLITICAL MEANING OF CHRISTIANITY: AN INTERPRETATION. By GLENN TINDER. *Louisiana State University Press. 257 pp. $29.95.*

***Reviewed by***
**Kenneth R. Craycraft, Jr.**

"I seek God! I seek God," wails the madman. "Whither is God?"

"We have killed him," cries the crowd, "you and I. All of us are his murderers. . . . God is dead. God remains dead."

Thus Friedrich Nietzsche heralded the death of God, and with that the news that we now live under the terrible burden of being on our own in this world. For Nietzsche, the death of God also meant the death of morality, beauty, truth, justice—all the things that a world with God had had. Now we must *make* these things for ourselves. But most importantly, thinks Nietzsche, we must realize the seriousness of the task. We properly ought to tremble at the thought of God's death, which leaves us standing at the abyss, shuddering at what now lies before us. God's death is not a time of celebration. On the contrary, it is a time of great mourning, of utter dread of what could become of us, and a time of extreme sobriety as we contemplate the task at hand: to forge our own values.

While Nietzsche wrote in the middle of the nineteenth century, the news of God's demise did not reach American shores until about the 1960s. *Time* magazine was there when it happened, and has been chronicling America's quest for happiness without God ever since. Many in America who make their livings talking about politics and morality live, like Nietzsche's last man, under the assumption that we can "be good without God," as Glenn Tinder phrased it in the December 1989 issue of the *Atlantic*. In his new book, *The Political Meaning of Christianity*, Tinder argues persuasively that this quest for goodness in a world without God is not only futile, but delusionary as well.

The issue is not, as many readers of the *Atlantic* article mistakenly thought, whether one must believe in God in order to be a "good" person. Some have tried to dispute (their misunderstanding of) Tinder's point by pointing to a roster of great and virtuous individuals in world history who have been avowed atheists. At the same time, some have catalogued the many horrendous deeds performed by those who have claimed belief in God, or who have even carried out their treachery in "the name of God."

But these assertions miss completely the more subtle point that Tinder, Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, makes in this interesting, though uneven, book. The question is not whether nonbelievers can be good people. Rather, it is the more profound question of whether we can even use such categories as "good" or "evil," "virtuous" or "vicious." Nietzsche did not think so. With the death of God, notions of good and evil, truth and falsehood, vulgarity and beauty all must be abandoned. These are notions rooted in the ancient Jewish and Christian notion of a transcendent law-giving God, in whom good, virtue, love, and justice are perfectly embodied. To reject belief in God is also to reject the very category "good." "We cannot give up the Christian

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God—and the transcendence given other names in other faiths—and go on as before," says Tinder. If we give up God, "we must give up Christian morality, too."

Tinder moves the problem of talking about good and evil from the personal realm into the political. Christianity, he explains, teaches us that politics can have its bearings only with reference to something that transcends it. "Many would like to think that there are no consequences" of the death of God, Tinder writes. They would like to think "that we can continue treasuring the life and welfare, the civil rights and political authority, of every individual without believing in a God who renders such attitudes and conduct compelling." But like Nietzsche's great disciple Max Weber, Tinder understands that this is impossible. With the death of God comes not only the death of individual morality, but the end of political philosophy as well. With the death of God, we have no moral references around which to frame political debate. The political virtues of "good customs and habits," explains Tinder, "need a spiritual base; and if it is lacking, they will gradually . . . disappear."

For this crucial insight, Tinder is to be applauded. He makes a compelling case that politics without God results in either authoritarian regimes (such as those we have recently seen disintegrate all around us) or in chaotic regimes (which Western democracies must be ever vigilant to avoid). Additionally, Tinder is correct to insist throughout the book that proper politics, since it is derived from something that transcends it, must always recognize its inferiority. Politics is necessary, thinks Tinder, but it is derivative and thus lower.

But this is also the point at which the book shows some significant weaknesses. The reader is never clear just how these transcendentally based goods are to manifest themselves in political life. Nor is it clear why, given Tinder's extremely pessimistic view of man and the world, Christians ought to taint themselves with politics at all. Throughout the book, Tinder leaves the impression that any participation in the political arena is necessarily participation in evil and injustice. Any effort to right an injustice, he suggests, necessarily results in the commission of another.

While the historic Christian position agrees with Tinder that the fullness of justice is not possible in this world—that any justice accomplished here is but a shadow of God's justice—it does not agree with him that "the very standards of justice are in mutual conflict." For Tinder, equality is the "first principle of justice," and he perceives this principle not simply as equality of opportunity—a level playing field—but as equality of *result*. Christianity, he maintains, teaches a "principled egalitarianism" in which no individual ought to have greater goods than another. Inequality, Tinder alleges, is inherently sinful, "one of the evils reflecting our fallenness."

But in order to achieve a proper egalitarianism on the political level, Tinder goes on, it becomes necessary to confiscate the greater goods that some have, and thus commit a different injustice. Some people work harder and have more, and "it would be unjust for such people not to be rewarded." But since it is inherently unjust that such individuals have more than others, "it is in the nature of the human situation that we cannot be just in one way without being unjust in another." Equal justice is neither "practical" nor "coherent," Tinder asserts, since "the pursuit of justice is . . . subject to two irreconcilable demands." But Tinder's is not the historic Christian idea of justice. Christian thought makes no claim that inequality, *per se*, is unjust; one must examine the cause of the inequality to make such a judgment. The Christian idea of equality avoids the incoherence in Tinder's system.

One might conclude from Tinder's account, as already noted, that Christians ought to refrain from political activity. He writes as a Lutheran, but his view of politics seems closer to the more radical wing of the Protestant Reformation. "Power is intrinsically evil," he insists, not just subject to evil uses. Likewise, because it employs power, "the state is essentially evil." Tinder's notions of justice (which demands "conflicting imperatives") and liberty (which is "inevitably accompanied by coercion") suggest that the proper Christian position is one of quietism. To be involved in politics or political "justice," on Tinder's account, one must commit injustice.

*Explicitly*, though, Tinder rejects quietism, saying that "Christian premises decisively rule out any such conclusion"; and he explains at length how Christians ought to proceed in the political arena. His accounts of justice and the evil of power, he says, point out the ambiguity of political life and the tragedy of human history, but do not imply that one ought to withdraw from political activity. Further, he explains, this description of politics reminds us to proceed cautiously when we enter the political arena, so as to minimize the injustice we inevitably will cause. But still, Tinder thinks, to engage in politics is *necessarily* to commit injustice.

Politics does involve ambiguity, and at times uncertainty about the very possibility of justice; sometimes an evil act must be committed to prevent a much greater one. But one can take full account of the sinfulness of human institutions without concluding that participation in them necessarily implies sin. Tinder wants to save a place for political involvement, but since for him political life is always participation in injustice, it would seem to follow that the proper Christian position is one of passivity. He removes the possibility of *any* rational politics, and cannot give an account of how Christians might participate in politics without committing sin.

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Tinder is brought to this impasse by a rather truncated view of the Christian tradition. Despite his assertion to the contrary at the end of the book, Tinder's account of Christianity and political theory is a thoroughly modern one. His Christian tradition dates essentially from 1517, and he gives little notice to the contribution that prior Christian political thought can make to the modern situation. Tinder's notion of Christian egalitarianism is based upon a Cartesian/Lutheran notion of the "exalted individual," wherein "all individuals without exception—the most base, the most destructive, the most repellent—have equal claims on our respect," rather than on a more ancient notion of dignified personhood, in which individuality is only the beginning of a complete view of man. For Tinder, the Christian message is not one of human fulfillment, but of individual exaltation. When he speaks of community, it is not natural but conventional and voluntary.

THIS MODERN IDEA of individual human existence also leads to a concept of *agape* that seems to depend too much on the liberal notion of natural rights and too little on the Christian doctrine of duty grounded in transcendent love. Spawning his notion of the "exalted individual," Tinder's description of *agape* tends to sound less like a responsibility on my part to love unconditionally (though this responsibility is explicitly stated by Tinder), and more like a claim that I have against others to love me. His notion of *agape* seems to come more from Rousseau than the Christian tradition, as when he says that *agape* is what has led to such things as the modern welfare state, where echoes of "Christian" egalitarianism can be seen. Tinder's "individual" is so exalted that he or she has a claim on my love. Indeed, the *agape*-inspired exalted individual is coincidental with a "secular value" in which "my claims upon others are rightly matched by their claims upon me." While Tinder never explicitly equates his notion of *agape* with rights-based claims, he is not as careful as he might have been to make clear the radical distinction between these two ideas.

The political meaning of Christianity is that politics cannot save us, and all attempts to approach justice and peace in this world are analogous and derivative. Christian faith sits in judgment on all political striving. Tinder fully understands this, but he goes too far when he says that Christianity "condemns" all politics. The ancient Christian notion of politics is that it approximates the justice of the kingdom of heaven. While we cannot achieve perfect peace and justice in this world, we have a model by which we can achieve remedial justice. To acknowledge that political justice is not full or complete is not to say that justice remains entirely elusive or that it is an incoherent concept.

Christian faith does not tell us that there is no possibility of justice in this world. Rather it informs us about models of justice, reminds us that earthly justice is only a shadow of divine justice, and gives us hope for the justice that is to come. This leads to prudence and guarded political activity. We ought not identify religious faith with political goals, but neither ought we to conclude that justice is necessarily incoherent, or that politics is necessarily evil. Following St. Thomas Aquinas, we can take seriously the ambiguity of political life but still see that it can be a noble and honorable pursuit.

*The Political Meaning of Christianity* has the proper inclination. First, it makes a strong argument that morality and political discourse are doomed to failure without a transcendent reference. Also, as over against typical recent books with similar titles, it makes the fundamental and crucial point that politics and Christianity must never be seen as coterminous. Tinder warns us about even tending in the direction of identifying certain political aims with Christian dogma. For this needed correction, the book makes a valuable contribution.

But Tinder's neglect of the great tradition of political thought that the first 1500 years of Christianity have delivered to us and his commendable but unsuccessful attempt to escape the language of a modern notion of rights and social justice make the book deficient both in what is said and what is left unsaid. Those who write from a Christian perspective while respecting the good things about modern liberalism must be careful to avoid various pitfalls along the way. To his credit, Tinder clearly recognizes these obstacles, explicitly contrasting what he is trying to advocate from similar but different ideas. But he seems unable to break out of a universe of discourse more conditioned by modern liberalism than by ancient Christianity.

## A Minimalist Aristotle?

INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE. By STUART HAMPSHIRE. *Harvard University Press. 195 pp. $20.*

***Reviewed by*** **Russell Hittinger**

STUART HAMPSHIRE begins his new book by pointing out that "there are a thousand or more themes that might be pursued under the heading of moral and political philosophy." In *Innocence and Experience,* Hampshire treats at least several dozen major issues in moral philosophy under the twin themes of morality as prohibition and limit, and morality as aspiration and ideal. The latter theme expresses our concern for human perfection. Although substantive conceptions of the human good are diverse, and often in conflict, they would nonetheless seem to be an inescapable facet of morality. The former theme expresses our concern

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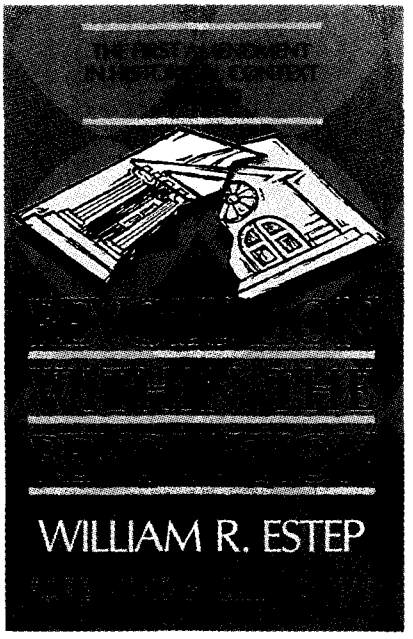
for justice—particularly justice as rules of arbitration, which is to say justice as procedural fairness. Hampshire argues that the only mode of morality that unites all humanity is the legal rather than the perfectionist model.

In arguing for a "thin notion of minimum procedural justice," Hampshire is not offering anything especially original. The priority of the legal and procedural model of practical reason is, after all, the standard modern position uniting, if not all humanity, then at least theorists as diverse as Rawls and Hobbes, and arguably Kant as well. What makes Hampshire's defense of this position interesting is that he develops it in a way that is remarkably free of certain epistemological biases which usually attend the so-called "thin notion" of justice.

Hampshire presents himself as a kind of Aristotelian. "Philosophical time and ingenuity have been wasted," he says, by philosophers who have tried to improve upon Aristotle. It was Aristotle's genius, he contends, to have understood that theoretical and practical reason each have their distinctive standards of correctness. Indeed, Aristotle understood that there is not one standard of rationality—it is unreasonable to hold one standard of reason. Furthermore, it was Aristotle's signal achievement (against Plato) to see that the "good" is analogical, and hence susceptible to manifold ways of predication and applicable to diverse ways of life.

Hampshire suggests that Aristotle is a more reliable guide on practical reason than post-Newtonian philosophers. Modern philosophers, in his view, tend to be reductionists who demand that moral propositions measure up to the standards of the natural sciences; if they fail to do so, they cannot be taken seriously. Moral discourse, therefore, avoids all of the untidy elements of experience which do not fit the interest of "some prevailing epistemology." So far, so good.

Hampshire's Aristotelianism, however, is pressed into the service of modern notions of procedural justice. We find here an Aristotelianism that has set aside Aristotle's teleological perfectionism. Hampshire jettisons Aristotle's conception of a determinate *telos* for human life, as well as the Platonic residue of the hierarchical soul. There is very little discussion of the great Aristotelian themes of virtue and friendship, with or without the attendant metaphysical hierarchies. In short, Hampshire gives us an Aristotelianism of minimum common needs, or what he calls the conditions of "mere decency." If one were to imagine the "state of nature" postulated by modern political theorists as populated by Hampshirean Aristotelians rather than by modern epistemologists, then one would have the sense of the themes of *Innocence and Experience*.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THE LEGAL MODEL of practical reason highlights an experience that is pervasive in both the private and public spheres of practical rationality. According to Hampshire, when we deliberate about actions, policies, and possibilities, it is essential to adopt an adversarial mode of discourse. That is to say, when we deliberate, either privately or in common, we recognize the necessity of allowing the pros and cons, the ayes and the nays, to have their say. In a court of law, for example, it is a canon of fairness that the contending pictures and accounts of action come before the judge. This procedure weeds out bias and insures a certain measure of impartiality. Hampshire is careful to note that the adjudicatory process does not function in the absence of substantive content. Practical reason in both its individual and public settings always draws upon notions of the good filtered through precedents and guided by analogies. We do not invent procedures and then go in search of content. Rather, the procedural notion of justice can be said to be "prior" in the sense that it insures that discourse and deliberation are fair.

Tyranny, Hampshire argues, puts no check upon the natural drive to domination among practical reasoners. It deploys argument in order to stop or negate argument. Having as its goal consensus, which is nothing less than a practical life or system free of conflict, the tyrannical regime conceives of moral deliberation as issuing in victory—a win-and-take-no-prisoners conception. Hampshire contends that philosophers aid and abet this scheme, for they not only hanker for consensus, but in overestimating the good of consensus, they greatly underestimate the evils that need to be mitigated if we are to have minimal "decency."

Refreshingly, Hampshire gives us no list of basic goods, in the fashion of a John Rawls or Ronald Dworkin; he makes no effort to deduce by one or another transcendental logic the "great goods" which any *ordo juris* must protect and maintain. If anything, Hampshire is more interested in what could be called "basic bads," which any effective order of justice must bring under control. He concedes that our various conceptions of the good cannot be bleached of their controversial and conflicting content. Indeed, he insists that if conceptions of the good are to have any specific content, we must assume that there will always be conflict.

On this score, Hampshire is critical of Rawls, who, he says, uncritically smuggles in a conception of the good dominant in liberal society. Rawls is not, Hampshire suggests, procedural enough. In order to reach the good of consensus, Rawls has to rely upon the shared intuitions of liberals. The method merely gives universal shape and scope to the goods one already has in mind.

ALTHOUGH HAMPSHIRE raises the interesting question of how to avoid smuggling in the view of the good dominant in liberal society, he does not give us any answers. Indeed, it is a weakness of this book that he does not really struggle with the issue. The priority of morality as procedural justice, for which Hampshire gives some very good arguments, will be held in suspension until the proponent can convince us (or at least those of us who do not avow a liberal view of the good) that this amounts to something more than an in-house set of arrangements for those who are at odds with traditional conceptions of the good. While Hampshire emphasizes a procedural and adversarial model of practical discourse, and makes some sharp and cogent contrasts between it and tyranny, one might ask whether the concrete legal cultures which have embodied his procedural vision do not, in reality, have the goal of foreclosing public debate about substantive moral and religious issues.

The book is structured around a contrast between innocence and experience. One will come away from this book disappointed if he or she approaches it in search of a properly detailed and sympathetic account of what the author includes under the rubric of "innocence." Under this theme Hampshire considers various species of epistemological reductionism, metaphysical excess, and religious fanaticism. It is one thing to give sober assessments of pluralism and conflict in the moral life, but are we to believe that innocents only have teeth for biting? One could read this book and have no regret in bidding good riddance to those who subordinate procedural justice to the good. One would scarcely believe that the very adversarial institutions of procedural justice were developed in precisely those legal and moral cultures that are consigned in Hampshire's account to the status of innocents. There is much to recommend in Hampshire's work—its clarity, its even-handedness with regard to contending moral epistemologies, its way of sustaining the theme of "experience" through any number of important issues in moral philosophy—but the book finally lacks the tension its title promisingly suggests.

## BRIEFLY NOTED

THE PRESBYTERIAN PREDICAMENT: SIX PERSPECTIVES. Edited by MILTON J. COALTER, JOHN M. MULDER, and LOUIS B. WEEKS. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 179 pp. $12.95 paper.*

Six essays, originally a lecture series at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, explore contemporary Presbyterianism as representative of mainline Protestantism. Numerical decline, spiritual malaise, marginality, and internal conflict are problems generally addressed by the first four of these essays. The most useful is the first, by Princeton Sociologist Robert Wuthnow, which continues (and to some extent repeats) the helpful critique of contemporary American religion presented in Wuthnow's two books, *The Restructuring of American Religion* and *The Struggle for America's Soul.* He sees Presbyterianism's internal polarization as its most critical problem. Edward Farley urges the Presbyterian Church to be true to its tradition of "critical modernism," (thus supporting one side of the

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polarization with which Wuthnow deals). Barbara Wheeler analyzes research on congregations (of which she believes more is needed) and finds in it no clear guidance as to a way out of the malaise. Benton Johnson points to the erosion of spiritual discipline and practice within the denomination, as symbolized by the decline of Sabbath observance. The final two essays do not address the predicament of the denomination as such, but offer black and feminist perspectives. Gayraud Wilmore gives a history of Black Presbyterianism, and Barbara Zikmund discusses ordination in terms of the influence of women clergy. The book has the weakness of any collection of essays loosely tied together by a general theme, without a significant attempt by the editors to integrate them. No clear understanding of what the "Presbyterian predicament" is, or how it might be addressed, emerges. However, this is the first of a projected seven-volume series on "The Presbyterian Presence: The Twentieth-Century Experience," expected to grow out of a major study of the Presbyterian Church (USA) funded by the Lilly Endowment and conducted by Louisville Theological Seminary. As other volumes come along a clearer picture may begin to take shape.

—*Richard Hutcheson*

Liberalism and the Moral Life. Edited by Nancy L. Rosenblum. *Harvard. 302 pp. $32.50.*

Twelve essays reacting to Michael Sandel's brilliant critique of liberalism and the limits of justice. Alasdair MacIntyre, Roberto Unger, Robert Nozick, and others also come in for their knocks. Stephen Holmes of the University of Chicago comes pretty close to saying they're all a bunch of fascists who refuse to own up to their intellectual ancestry. Of genuine value, by contrast, is Charles Taylor's argument that the liberalism of individual rights and indifference to the common good is, in largest part, a peculiar and relatively recent American phenomenon that by no means exhausts the possibilities of liberal democracy in the contemporary world.

Beliefs, Values, and Policies: Conviction Politics in a Secular Age. By Duncan B. Forrester. *Oxford. 110 pp. $12.95 paper.*

Addressing the problem of "the naked public square," a professor of Christian ethics at the University of Edinburgh tests a number of proposals and comes down, tentatively, on the side of R. H. Tawney and Alasdair MacIntyre who, he believes, suggest a Christian way of advancing social justice without abandoning convictions about transcendent truth.

Philosopher of Revelation: The Life and Thought of S. L. Steinheim. By Joshua O. Haberman. *Jewish Publication Society. 332 pp. $29.95.*

Salomon Ludwig Steinheim, like Franz Rosenzweig a century later, wrestled with conversion to Christianity and then returned to Judaism to become one of its most profound exponents. This is an annotated translation of the first volume of his *Revelation According to the Doctrine of Judaism*, with excerpts from the remaining three volumes. Christian readers, too, might relish Steinheim's spirited dissection of Schleiermacher and his insistence that revelation is essential both to God's freedom and ours.

Democracy and Its Critics. By Robert A. Dahl. *Yale. 397 pp. $29.95.*

Sterling Professor of Political Science Emeritus at Yale, Dahl is among the most academically respected students of democratic theory and practice. Although written before the dramatic changes of 1989, this volume offers a relatively sanguine view of democracy's future. In Dahl's view, the progress of history is from democracy in the city state, to the nation state, to some form of transnational governance. Preoccupied with the Greek origins of democracy, Dahl rather thoroughly ignores the seventeenth and eighteenth century religious foundations of modern democracy in England and America.

Mill and Liberalism. By Maurice Cowling. *Cambridge. 207 pp. $14.95 paper.*

The second edition of a 1963 book that, in some circles, is venerated. The main text is unchanged, but Cowling, a Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, offers a new forty-seven-page rollicking account of British intellectual and journalistic life during the Thatcher years. It is laced with considerable wit, and only as much venom as is absolutely necessary. The book itself is a thoroughly entertaining, and for the most part convincing, exposé of the "higher liberalism" fathered by among the most morally pretentious of thinkers, John Stuart Mill. It is Cowling's belief that Mill's anti-Christian animus shaped his improbable ambition to replace the church's moral authority with his bourgeois version of "critical reason." *Mill and Liberalism* is required reading for anyone who wants to understand what went wrong with certain varieties of liberalism at their intellectual root.

The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations. By Robert Nozick. *Simon and Schuster. 303 pp. $21.95.*

Ponderings by the famed Harvard philosopher on subjects as various as life, death, happiness, emotions, sex, and why people ponder such things. Written during amply funded periods of R&R in Mediterranean climes, the book contains occasional flashes of originality. Fans of Mr. Nozick might wish to wait for his next book, written, one hopes, in more bracing New England. (At least more bracing for rare minds such as his.)

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IN GODS WE TRUST: NEW PATTERNS OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN AMERICA. Edited by THOMAS ROBBINS and DICK ANTHONY. *Transaction. 544 pp. $22.95 paper.*

A big and fairly inclusive reader, with perhaps excessive attention given to the religiously exotic and marginal. But then, the subject is pluralism, understood as variety. The editors' concluding essay is in essential agreement with the argument offered by Robert Bellah, *et al.*, in *Habits of the Heart.*

PAUL: SAINT OF THE INNER CITY. By JOSEPH P. FITZPATRICK. *Paulist Press. 109 pp. $5.95 paper.*

Fitzpatrick, now emeritus at Fordham, did pioneering sociological work on the migration of Hispanics to northern cities. The present edifying discourse relates the problems of our inner cities to the ministry of Paul the Apostle. In a time when Catholic and oldline Protestant churches are withdrawing from ministry among the urban poor, this little book might occasion some salutary soul-searching.

TRACKING THE MAZE. By CLARK H. PINNOCK. *Harper & Row. 227 pp. $24.95.*

The subtitle pretty well says it: "Finding Our Way Through Modern Theology From an Evangelical Perspective." Pinnock's is an ambitious project that attempts to work out a typology of theological (and philosophical) methods of the modern period, in search of a believable postmodernity. Aware that evangelicalism is something of a "theological ghetto," Pinnock invites other evangelicals to follow him into the maze. Whether he finds his way out is uncertain. If not, however, he is lost in intelligent company.

THE NATURE OF POLITICS. By ROGER D. MASTERS. *Yale. 298 pp. $25.*

An important work by a professor of government at Dartmouth who wants to combat nihilism by grounding politics in evolutionary biology ("biopolitics"). Masters, a student of Leo Strauss, makes an elegant naturalistic case that he hopes is not incompatible with biblical religion. Whatever doubts they may have about his naturalism, Christian and Jewish proponents of various "natural law" approaches may find support and provocation in Masters' suggestion that moral judgment has its basis in the scientifically discernible "natural" ends of man.

WHO LIVES? WHO DIES? ETHICAL CRITERIA IN PATIENT SELECTION. By JOHN F. KILNER. *Yale. 359 pp. $29.95.*

A professor of medical ethics with a vast command of the literature leads us, once again, into the dilemma-plagued decision making about the allocation of scarce medical resources. Kilner clearly rejects some proposed criteria, such as the social utility of the patient. And he is certainly right in saying that ethical dilemmas in medical choice are increasing. He perhaps puts too much weight on factors of technology, however, slighting questions of cultural and personal understandings of virtue that might curb the medical avariciousness of contemporaries who turn their lives into immortality projects that are inevitably and quite precisely dead-ended.

THE REIGN OF CONSCIENCE: INDIVIDUAL, CHURCH, AND STATE IN LORD ACTON'S HISTORY OF LIBERTY. By JOHN NURSER. *Garland. 220 pp. $42.*

The author, currently Dean of Lincoln Cathedral, has worked through thousands of note cards left by Acton at his death in 1902, and from them has constructed the main themes and outline of the *History of Liberty* that Acton never got around to writing. In Nurser's view, Acton's understanding of Providence and progress in history, culminating in the American constitutional order, reflected a firmly grounded liberalism that would not have been discredited by 1914-1918 and subsequent events. As to Acton's complex and often contentious relationship to the Roman Catholic Church, Nurser suggests that Lord Acton would have been greatly pleased by his vindication at the Second Vatican Council. While eminently debatable, Nurser's judgments are persuasively presented, and the sources he displays are always intriguing. Regrettably, the price of the book will limit it to major libraries and the more devoted of Acton mavens.

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL THEORY. By JAMES S. COLEMAN. *Harvard. 993 pp. $39.50.*

Those familiar with Coleman chiefly through his important work in practical fields may not be prepared for this massive theoretical exercise. Indeed, it is a work for specialists. The publisher says it may be the most important project in social theory since Talcott Parsons' *Structure of Social Action* in 1936. Perhaps so, but the book also reflects some of the reasons why the credit of sociology has taken such a deep dive in recent years. *Foundations* is dismally reductionistic. Truth, justice, religion, rights—all are not simply socially constructed but determined and exhaustively explained by social dynamics. The author seems to be quite untouched by the alternative constructions of reality advanced in the last several decades in philosophy, political science, and even in sociology. If *Foundations* is to be believed, economics is, by comparison with sociology, the convivial science.

THE CATHOLIC MYTH: THE BEHAVIOR AND BELIEFS OF AMERICAN CATHOLICS. By ANDREW GREELEY. *Scribners. 322 pp. $21.95.*

Andrew Greeley has often written that he considers it a compliment to be called a loud-mouthed Irish priest. By that criterion he is here in top form. In a mix of anger and resent-

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ment, he rails against the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, most of whom he thinks are self-serving fools, and reiterates his support for "communal Catholics" who like being Catholic even though they have long since decided, as he puts it, "to hell with the leadership." Greeley's discovery of the role of religious loyalty in forming identity, he "candidly" tells the reader, would have won for him the Nobel Prize in sociology, were there such a prize. The key to understanding Catholics, he says, is poetic or imaginative religious behavior, rather than doctrine or ethics. Greeley's religious poetry is highly erotic, which may be offputting to readers who cannot manage to sustain his level of excitement about the fact that the flesh in which God became incarnate included genitalia. As an appendix, he reprints an article arguing that Catholicism favors a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. It is an old argument that has little to do with the rest of the book, and that today holds slight interest for people who give more careful attention to Catholic social teaching, but apparently Father Greeley feels some purpose is served in having the article between hard covers. *The Catholic Myth* is vintage Greeley and will no doubt be enjoyed by *aficionados* of his brand of calculated outrageousness.

Utopia Against the Family: The Problems and Politics of the American Family. By Bryce J. Christensen. *Ignatius. 146 pp. $11.95 paper.*

A spirited polemic against "pro-family" government programs promoted by people who are, says Christensen, convinced that the family is an anachronistic and oppressive institution. The argument is that utopianisms of all varieties reject the limits and satisfactions inherent in faithful marriage and the raising of children. Christensen is especially effective in his critique of Swedish models of family policy, and in analyzing the reasons for a "birth dearth" that has brought many Western nations to a point below zero population growth.

Private Virtue & Public Policy: Catholic Thought and National Life. Edited by James Finn. *Transaction. 141 pp. $29.95.*

Most of these essays refuse to accept the claim that "economic justice" is an oxymoron. The writers examine, with varying degrees of appreciation, the efforts of the American bishops to clarify Catholic teaching. Among the essayists are William E. Simon, Michael Novak, and James Q. Wilson. Editor Finn provides a concluding essay titled, "Does It Matter What the Bishops Said?" He very convincingly answers in the affirmative. This collection belongs in the libraries of those who attend to Christian social teaching in our time.

Augustus to Constantine: The Rise and Triumph of Christianity in the Roman World. By Robert M. Grant. *Harper & Row. 334 pp. $12.95 paper.*

A most welcome reprint of a 1970 study that has everything to do with today's disputes about Christianity in the public arena. Grant masterfully recounts Christian confusions and ambitions regarding the connections between spiritual and temporal realms. Contemporary readers will be struck by the similarities between second-century gnosticism and today's "consciousness raising" as found, for instance, in radical feminism. Grant is particularly informative on the painful ambiguities of Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism in the early church. *Augustus to Constantine* is an important work that belongs in any basic collection of books on Christian history.

Articles of Faith, Articles of Peace: The Religious Liberty Clauses and the American Public Philosophy. Edited by James Davison Hunter and Os Guinness. *Brookings. 168 pp. $22.95.*

In 1988 the Williamsburg Charter was unveiled, and it has become something of a point of reference in discussions about religion and the First Amendment. The Charter was drafted by veterans of church-state arguments, including William Bentley Ball, Dean Kelley, and Richard John Neuhaus. The present book contains selected contributions from a conference on the Charter at the University of Virginia. Of special interest are Michael Sandel's "Freedom of Conscience or Freedom of Choice?" and Peter Berger's deliciously whimsical reflection on religion and law in America.

The Fundamentalist Phenomenon. Edited by Norman J. Cohen. *Eerdmans. 266 pp. $14.95 paper.*

An eminently useful collection of fifteen essays on Protestant Fundamentalism, issuing from a series of conferences sponsored by Hebrew Union College of New York City. Most of the essays attend chiefly to the political and social significance of Fundamentalism in American life. Although the volume describes itself as "a view from within/a response from without," we have here non-Fundamentalist discussions of the "phenomenon," and they range from the polemically hostile to the critically sympathetic. Among the writers are Jaroslav Pelikan, Clark Pinnock, James Davison Hunter, George Marsden, James Reichley, Leon Wieseltier, and Richard John Neuhaus.

The Moral Dimension: Toward a New Economics. By Amitai Etzioni. *Free Press. 314 pp. $24.95.*

Etzioni of George Washington University offers stringent criticisms of neoclassical economists who assume that the market is a force that goes by itself. Economics operates within a social and moral "capsule," and the author contends for a deontological ethics of a Kantian variety that puts the market into a more full-

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orbed account of human relationships, and all for the sake of the market itself. It is not evident that Etzioni has proposed a "new economics," but there are important questions raised and some readers will find them worth working through the frequently novel and jarring jargon. Readers concerned with questions of public philosophy will likely find least satisfying the book's scant treatment of the democratic sources of moral judgment, notably religion.

CONFESSOR BETWEEN EAST AND WEST: A PORTRAIT OF UKRAINIAN CARDINAL JOSEPH SLIPYJ. By JAROSLAV PELIKAN. *Eerdmans. 249 pp. $29.95.*

Yale's distinguished church historian is a Lutheran who describes himself as orthodox and catholic without being Orthodox or Catholic. He is also Slavic, and that no doubt has everything to do with this scholarly labor of love. Cardinal Slipyj (1892-1984) early became the spiritual leader of Ukrainian Catholics and was imprisoned by the Nazis, then spent eighteen years in the Soviet gulag. Upon his release in 1963 he was forced to spend the rest of his time in Rome, where he labored tirelessly to alert the West to Communist oppression and to work for the full unity of Christian West and Christian East. Haply (or providentially), the book appears at a time of promising developments for the church in the Ukraine, developments that seemed highly improbable when Slipyj died in 1984.

## INSOMNIA

1.
I start to dream I am waking
and wake with a start from the dream.

Shadows gather in the attic,
in the hallways, bedrooms, walls:

their smell, like gas, is everywhere.
I start to dream I am waking . . .

2.
Night falls, then falls again
as if drunk, as if slipping on ice

while clothed in leaves whose
damp mass could drag telephone poles

to their knees. The rain is cold.
Its secrets flood the throat of the gutter.

3.
Childishly, the voice in my head
continues to give me the wrong directions.

Left at the next exit, it says. No, the *next* one.
I want to wring the little bastard's neck.

The sky is gray. If I make it to daylight,
I'm never taking this blasted road again.

**Christopher Yu**

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*Richard John Neuhaus*

# The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

# Polygamy, Peyote, and the Public Peace

No one should be surprised that decisions of great constitutional moment are sometimes occasioned by cases that seem trivial or exotic. Those who are threatened by the majority sentiment of the moment appeal to the Constitution, although not always successfully. There was, for instance, the 1879 Supreme Court ruling in *Reynolds* that outlawed polygamy among Mormons. For another instance, *Employment Division v. Smith* came down this April. There is mounting controversy over that decision. A truly remarkable coalition, representing the ideological spectrum from Left to Right, urgently petitioned the Court to reconsider *Smith*. The Court had not formally reconsidered a case for thirty years, and it turned down this petition as well. So *Smith* stands, and given the makeup of the Court majority in this case, it seems quite possible that constitutional doctrine has been dramatically changed for years to come.

The case, everyone agrees, was both trivial and exotic. That is, it did not involve a problem that seemed to be of great national moment. Two men in Oregon, both Native Americans, were fired from their state jobs and denied unemployment benefits because they ingested peyote as part of a sacramental rite in the Native American Church. Peyote, which is a mild hallucinogen made from cactus, is outlawed in Oregon. The men claimed that their constitutional right to the "free exercise" of religion had been violated. In *Smith*, the Supreme Court ruled against them.

*That* the Court ruled against them is not the reason for the controversy over this case. The dissenters (Blackmun, Brennan, Marshall) do make a plausible case that the judgment should have gone the other way. They suggest that the majority was panicked into writing bad law by the current sense of urgency over the drug crisis. They point out that twenty-three states, plus the federal government itself, exempt the religious use of peyote, that there is little demand for peyote, that it is not part of the illegal drug market, and that there is no evidence of ill effects on its users. In sum, they argue that there is no "compelling state interest" that justifies Oregon's overriding the religious practice of the plaintiffs. It is the last point that brings us to the reason for the storm over *Smith*.

For a very long time, the Court has held that religious free exercise is a "preferred" constitutional right. In that sense it is like other rights in the First Amendment, such as free speech, press, and assembly. The established doctrine has been that, when it comes to these preferred rights, the state must prove that it has a compelling or overriding governmental interest in curtailing or denying such guaranteed freedoms. It is well understood that no right is absolute. When, for instance, speech becomes sufficiently incendiary or an assembly becomes an unmanageable mob, the common good may require the overriding of speech and assembly rights, constitutionally preferred though they be. Similarly, a claim that certain conduct is required by religious conviction must be tested against the necessities of the common good.

### *Nullification of the Religion Clause?*

The question before the Court, then, was whether there was sufficiently compelling state interest for Oregon to outlaw the religious use of peyote. That was the question addressed by both sides in the oral argument before the Court. In its April 17 decision, however, the Court revealed that it had changed the rules of the game, thereby making the oral argument irrelevant. The question of compelling state interest, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote for the majority, is now eliminated. From here on, the Court will not entertain free exercise claims that seek exemptions to



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laws of "general applicability." In effect, the free exercise guarantee in the Religion Clause of the First Amendment has been declared null and void. Put differently, the Religion Clause has been declared redundant. To be sure, it might still have meaning were a legislature to pass a law that established a specific religion and sought to impose its tenets on unwilling citizens. And it would have meaning were there a law that singled out one religion and prohibited its free exercise. But Scalia readily admits that such cases have never come before the Court, and it is unlikely that they ever will.

In view of the practical redundancy of the Religion Clause, therefore, it is to be considered out of play in the Court's future deliberations. The Religion Clause can be, as it were, folded into other rights guaranteed in the First Amendment. The supposition is that the interests of religion can be adequately protected by, for instance, free speech and assembly. The switch in *Smith* took almost everyone by surprise, leaving some breathless, some outraged, and most puzzled. Sweeping, revolutionary, jurisprudentially wanton, recklessly adventurous—these are among the terms used by some of the most distinguished constitutional scholars in the country, including many admirers of Scalia and of the Court's new "conservative majority."

### *The Court Majority of the Future*

*Smith* is of added importance because it does indeed represent what would seem to be the majority of the future (Scalia, Kennedy, Rehnquist, Stevens, White). Justice Sandra Day O'Connor joined in the majority's conclusion but vigorously dissented from the reasoning in Scalia's majority opinion. In past decisions, O'Connor has shown that it does not take very much government interest for her to deem that interest "compelling" in overriding free exercise claims. She was quite prepared to uphold the Oregon law. But in her dissent from Scalia's opinion she convincingly, indeed devastatingly, demonstrates how radically he departs from established doctrine. Scalia's account of the Court's relevant precedents is so skewed that one leading jurist who is a longtime admirer of Scalia says, "I am sorry, but it is intellectually dishonest."

We cannot search Justice Scalia's conscience. Nor can we know why four other justices went along with his argument. Those who are not enthralled by the "majesty" of the Supreme Court might speculate that the four justices wanted to reach a conclusion that supported Oregon, and didn't pay too much attention to the reasoning by which Scalia took them there. That speculation seems less plausible, however, in view of the fact that they could have joined O'Connor in the conclusion while rejecting Scalia's reasoning. Admittedly, that would have produced the odd result, very embarrassing to Scalia, of five justices agreeing with the majority judgment while disowning the majority opinion in support of that judgment. For the time being, however, until the situation is clarified by future decisions, it is prudent to assume that a majority of the Court does concur in the argument advanced by Scalia in *Smith*.

### *Uncertain Implications*

If *Smith* becomes established doctrine, almost all the textbooks on religion and the First Amendment will have to be rewritten. Maybe that is not a bad thing. After all, almost all students of the subject agree that the Court has over the years made an awful mishmash of the Religion Clause, erratically pitting "no establishment" against "free exercise" in the most confusing ways. Perhaps, as Scalia's argument would allow, the Court should get out of the religion question altogether. Perhaps the Founders made a mistake in not seeing how mischievous a thoroughly unnecessary Religion Clause would turn out to be. While Scalia undoubtedly butchers the Court's precedents, perhaps that too is not a bad thing. *Stare decisis* can become a false god that inhibits the "creative interpretation" of "the living Constitution," as activist judges are wont to say. Except that Scalia and those joining his opinion are generally thought to be conservative critics of judicial activism.

Precedents aside, we may ask what are the policy implications of *Smith*. How much real difference will it make? That depends on how rigorous the Court is in following through on the argument offered by Scalia. One possible result might be welcomed by many, including many conservatives. If the Court really intends to void the Religion Clause, that would apply to "no establishment" as well as to "free exercise." In other words, if free exercise claims are to be lightly dismissed, establishment claims would logically come in for the same treatment. Thus, there would seem to be no problem with government aid to religious education and other activities. So long as a public purpose is served, and laws of general applicability observed, the fact that church schools or yeshivas advance religion is a matter of judicial indifference. Thus also, perennial disputes about religious symbols in public spaces, and even the continuing battle over prayer in public schools, would be obviated. These matters, according to the Scalia doctrine, would be entirely up to the people's will as expressed through legislatures. *Smith* would seem to accept, for policy purposes, the "religious neutrality" argument that has long been pressed by Philip Kurland of the University of Chicago. According to that argument, if a practice is otherwise constitutional, it does not matter one way or the other whether it involves religion. Those who find that argument attractive may be inclined to look with favor upon *Smith*.

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On June 4, the Court decided another religion case *(Board of Education v. Mergens),* and it reveals that at least some justices are indeed prepared to extend the logic of *Smith* to the no establishment provision. In *Mergens* the Court ruled, eight-to-one but with a flurry of separate opinions, that the Equal Access Act requiring public high schools to allow off-hours religious clubs is constitutional. Of special interest is the opinion written by Kennedy and joined by Scalia. According to them, no establishment means two things. It means that government cannot "give direct benefits to religion in such a degree that it in fact establishes a state religion or religious faith, or tends to do so." Second, no establishment means "that the government cannot coerce any student to participate in a religious activity." These two justices go on to criticize their colleagues who worry about whether a practice "endorses" religion. "But endorsement cannot be the test," writes Kennedy. "The word endorsement has insufficient content to be dispositive." The application of the endorsement test "may result in neutrality in name but hostility in fact when the question is the government's proper relation to those who express some religious preference." As we noted, there is reason to welcome this move away from an obsession with no establishment that too often results in rulings that infringe free exercise. The view of no establishment set forth by Kennedy and Scalia in *Mergens* might resolve some of the most hotly contested issues in church-state relations. Their *Mergens* argument on no establishment is the flip side of the *Smith* argument on free exercise.

### *Ominous Signs*

There are, however, other and deeply troubling aspects of the argument in *Smith.* Religion, according to Scalia's reading of the law, is limited to belief and profession. It does not include religious conduct. Since a law cannot force anyone to believe what he does not want to believe, it seems that there can, in principle, be no law that violates "no establishment." Since professing any belief is protected under free speech, there is no need for "free exercise." This is a truly radical rendering of constitutional history, but it seems to be what *Smith* proposes. The four justices who dissent prove beyond reasonable doubt that, in fact, "free exercise" has included conduct. All one has to do is look at the record of free exercise cases that have come before the Court. Having more than one wife, distributing religious literature without a license, wearing a yarmulke in the military, demanding kosher food in prison, refusing to send children to public school—all have to do with conduct. In all these instances, people came into conflict with laws not because of what they believed or said, but because of what they *did* in the name of the free exercise of religion.

Among many students of the Religion Clause, the *Yoder* decision of 1972 exemplifies the best in "free exercise" jurisprudence. *Yoder* decided that there was not sufficiently compelling governmental interest for the State of Wisconsin to force Old Order Amish parents to keep their children in school until age sixteen. Somewhat surprisingly, Scalia argues that *Smith* does not overturn or undermine *Yoder. Yoder,* he says, was not really a free exercise decision, but was a "hybrid" case involving other considerations, such as parental rights. The peculiar thing here is that parental rights are not mentioned in the text of the Constitution, and therefore rely entirely on earlier Court decisions. The dissenters in *Smith,* and some scholars who otherwise agree with Scalia's reasoning, find his interpretation of *Yoder* entirely implausible. William Bentley Ball, who argued *Yoder* before the Court, emphatically states that Scalia's interpretation of the case is "nonsense." The case was, he and others point out, clearly argued on the basis of free exercise, and it was on that basis that the Court upheld the religious rights of the Amish parents. If the reasoning advanced by Scalia in *Smith* had been in force then, *Yoder* would certainly have gone the other way.

### *Potential for Majoritarian Tyranny*

If the logic of *Smith* becomes established doctrine, religious rights have been stripped of their constitutional status and are left naked in the face of state power. Laws of "general applicability" regarding discrimination, for instance, will surely invite law suits against religious groups that refuse to ordain women or to employ active homosexuals and, for that matter, atheists in leadership positions. Similarly, laws controlling education could force religious schools to become clones of schools operated under government auspices. The implications for religiously sponsored health and social services are equally ominous. To such fears, Scalia has an answer: although religious exemptions are not grounded in the Constitution, legislatures are perfectly free to make whatever exemptions they wish, including exemptions for religion.

Scalia recognizes that this throws what were previously thought to be constitutionally protected rights to the will of the majority. Surely his statement on this question will go down as one of the more chilling, not to say callous, observations in the history of the Supreme Court: "It may fairly be said that leaving accommodation [of religion] to the political process will place at a relative disadvantage those religious practices that are not widely engaged in; but that unavoidable consequence of democratic government must be preferred to a system in which each conscience is a law unto itself or in which judges weigh the social importance of all laws against the centrality of all religious beliefs."

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If a small or unpopular religious group cannot muster a majority in the legislature to permit its free exercise of religion, well, that is just too bad. That is the price we pay for democracy. One cannot help but be impressed that this reasoning is advanced by a Roman Catholic (joined by another Catholic, Justice Kennedy) who seems to have forgotten that not so long ago Catholicism was disadvantaged by the laws of a Protestant majority. More to the judicial point, Scalia's argument stands in sharpest contrast to the previously secure understanding of First Amendment rights. That understanding was magisterially expressed by Justice Robert Jackson in *Barnette* (1941), and is cited by the dissenters in *Smith*. Jackson wrote: "The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the courts. One's right to life, liberty, and property, to free speech, a free press, freedom of worship and assembly, and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections."

But Justice Scalia says he is concerned for the public peace. The United States, he writes, "cannot afford the luxury" of setting laws aside simply because they restrict religious practices. He rumbles about the dangers of "anarchy" and offers what Justice O'Connor calls a hypothetical "parade of horribles" in order to demonstrate the threat posed by religious claims to exemption from laws. The Founders, however, surely did not view the guarantees of the First Amendment as luxuries. And, as O'Connor and others point out, there is a long legal history dealing with religious claims on a case-by-case basis. Such claims have not posed the threat of anarchy in the past, and there is no reason why they should do so in the future. Scalia's reasoning, to be sure, might get the Court out of a difficult area of constitutional law, but, if the Court's purpose is to avoid difficult decisions, it should get out of the constitutional law business altogether.

### *Scalia's Departure from Original Intent*

Among the oddest aspects of Scalia's opinion in *Smith* is the total absence of historical argument regarding the text and its "original understanding." Scalia limits himself to a discussion of precedents, almost all of them from the last fifty years. The oddness of this is that Scalia's legal philosophy is generally thought to accord with that of Robert Bork, so effectively set out in his *The Tempting of America*. In that philosophy, the definitive issue is what the writers and ratifiers of the Constitution intended, as best that can be determined from the text within the context of the time. Scalia does not even attempt to defend his reasoning on the basis of that history.

In his study of Madison and the constitutional process, *The First Liberty*, William Lee Miller makes a convincing case that it is not simply an accident that religious freedom is the first freedom listed in the First Amendment. Far from folding the Religion Clause into the other clauses (speech, press, assembly, petition), as Scalia apparently wants to do, it is closer to the original understanding to view other freedoms as dependent upon religious freedom. That view receives powerful support from a recent article by Michael McConnell in the *Harvard Law Review* on the free exercise of religion as understood by the Framers. McConnell, who is familiar to readers of this journal ("Taking Religious Freedom Seriously," May 1990), is without doubt one of our foremost authorities on religion and the First Amendment. His contention, backed by impressive historical evidence, is that the Religion Clause is anything but redundant. It is, rather, at the heart of the Framers' understanding of the polity that they were devising.

Madison is the key figure here, and he left a clear record of his view of religion's place in the public order. He wrote in his famed *Memorial and Remonstrance:* "Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe: And if a member of Civil Society, who enters into any subordinate Association, must always do it with a reservation of his duty to the general authority; much more must every man who becomes a member of any particular Civil Society do it with a saving of his allegiance of the Universal Sovereign." McConnell comments, "Religious freedom is a recognition not of the dignity of the individual (though it has that effect), but of the division of authority between earthly and spiritual sovereigns."

Locke and Rousseau thought that religious differences and "sects" would threaten the public peace, and therefore religious claims must be subordinated to general laws which are, in turn, given moral authority by a vague "civil religion." Not so with Madison. As we know from *Federalist Papers* 10 and 51, Madison understood that factions, including religious factions, would be a source of peace and stability, checking and balancing one another, and thus frustrating attempts to gain an oppressive monopoly. The reasoning of *Smith* comes down solidly on the side of Locke and Rousseau, and against Madison. And if against Madison, then against the single surest guide we have to the original understanding of the First Amendment.

### *Wider Issues of Freedom*

Although religious freedom is of inestimable value, it is not only religious freedom that is at stake in this dispute. McConnell again: "The Free Exercise Clause makes an important statement about the nature of government authority: it is limited. While the

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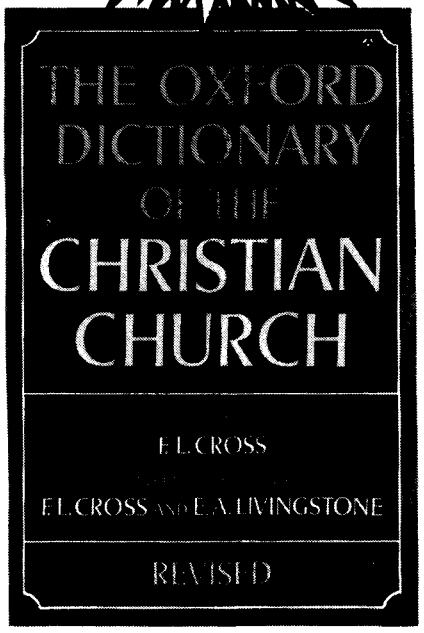


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government is powerless and incompetent to determine what particular conception of the divine is authoritative, the Free Exercise Clause stands as a recognition that such authority may exist, and if it exists, has a rightful claim on the allegiance of believers who happen to be American citizens. The actual occasions for free exercise exemptions may be rare now, as in our early history; but the importance of the principle outstrips its practical consequences. If government admits that God (whoever that may be) is sovereign, then it admits, also, that its claim on the loyalty and obedience of the citizens is partial and instrumental. Even the mighty democratic will of the people is, in principle, subordinate to the commands of God, as heard and understood in the individual conscience. In such a nation, with such a commitment, totalitarian tyranny is a philosophical impossibility."

In explicitly abandoning that commitment, the reasoning of *Smith*, if it is allowed to stand, bids fair to become one of the more notorious turning points in our judicial history. One First Amendment scholar has opined that Antonin Scalia and *Smith* on religious freedom may have earned a place in the Court's history alongside Roger Taney and *Dred Scott* on slavery. Critics of *Smith* do not necessarily support a religious exemption for the sacramental use of peyote any more than they think that there should be an exemption for polygamy. They do insist that a state that acknowledges that it is limited by higher authority should be forced to demonstrate a compelling governmental interest before overriding what citizens believe to be their duty to that higher authority. In so insisting, they stand with Madison and the other Framers who well understood that religious freedom is the foundation, not the enemy, of the public peace in this constitutional order.

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# ANOTHER KIND OF CONSPIRACY

We are generally opposed to conspiracy theories, because they are almost infinite in number and invite unlimited and unfalsifiable speculations that can never be brought to a conclusion. Conspiracy theories tend to be a tedious distraction from trying to understand the facts at hand. Nonetheless, we half-whimsically indulge what might be called a conspiracy hypothesis from time to time. For instance, we wonder why publications usually disposed to favor sundry feminisms have been featuring items that seem almost designed to discredit the feminist cause. Consider the *Christian Century* and the *New York Times*.

In its "How My Mind Has Changed" series, the *Century* runs an article by Carter Heyward of the Episcopal Divinity School in Massachusetts. It is a plaintive tale of one disaster after another—alcoholism, burnout, lesbian bondings and betrayals, and general unhappiness along the way of Ms. Heyward's "faith journey" in the service of the God/ess. The reader is invited to conclude that the author's miseries result from the oppression of a patriarchal society, and that is the kind of paranoid piety to which the editors of the *Century* do occasional obeisance. The conspiracy hypothesis, however, is that they are on the sly giving Ms. Heyward and her sisters all the rope they need. It saves the editors the awkwardness of explicitly criticizing a once-fashionable movement that they now find embarrassing.

As for the *Times*, there is the cover story in a recent issue of its Sunday magazine titled, "Who Says We Haven't Made a Revolution? A Feminist Takes Stock." Referring to Mary Wollstonecraft's writing in the eighteenth century, Vivian Gornick writes that feminism has a way of coming and going, each time creating a small band of believers. "That's it: a handful," Ms. Gornick writes. "There weren't many of us in 1790 and there aren't that many of us in 1990." But there have been achievements this time around: "We invented consciousness-raising (the personal is political), and we made sexism the natural analogue of racism and homophobia." The big achievement in her view, an achievement now imperiled, is the right to abortion.

But even though many women are going back to having babies, and are becoming convinced that sexual plumbing does not say everything that needs to be said about gender differences, Ms. Gornick is not discouraged. Feminism, she says, is like psychoanalysis: a flash of insight is followed by endless struggles to work through one's fear of what that insight implies. The women's movement of the '70s was the flash, and now "we must believe that reiteration of the insight is the purge [of fear] itself; that after each repeat the patient is, in fact, not the same as before—and neither is the world. I, for one, do believe that." In her faith Ms. Gornick is sustained by "intermittent erotic connection, and the company of intelligent women." The feminist must go on, she says, "speaking hard truths into the rejecting air" and holding dear "the memory of visionary politics." At the heart of her belief system is the doctrine that "each human being is essentially alone, and *therefore* it was of the greatest importance that each person own as much of . . . herself as possible. To die alone, having had no power over one's own life, was a terrible thing." That, surely, is a belief of infinite sadness, for what then could be more terrible than the loss of control and power that

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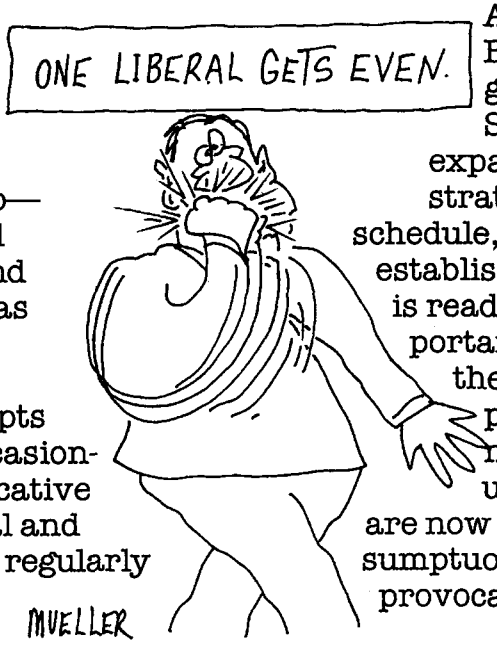


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comes, inevitably, with death? Were anyone looking for a tract to dissuade people from conversion to the feminist faith, we would recommend "Who Says We Haven't Made a Revolution?"

The conspiracy hypothesis might also help explain why the *Times* has returned Anna Quindlen to the position of regular columnist. The stereotype promulgated by male chauvinists is that men are cool, argumentative, and rational, while women are emotional, nurturing, usually silly when it comes to ideas, but awfully cute. Ms. Quindlen seems determined to reinforce the stereotype, and one cannot help but wonder whether the editors don't know it. Almost any of her recent columns might serve to illustrate the point.

"Dirty Pictures," for example, is a polemic against censorship. Drawing, however shakily, on her Catholic "background," Ms. Quindlen appeals to Scripture. " 'The truth shall make you free,' wrote the Apostle John," says she. In truth, the Evangelist quotes Jesus as saying, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32, RSV). The truth that Ms. Quindlen has on her mind, however, is the truth of an exhibition that includes some certifiedly "artistic" photographs of a man peeing into another man's mouth and similar homoerotic behavior. "Think of it as bad stuff you don't like," she writes, "but don't think of it as bad stuff I *can't* like." The libertarian Ms. Quindlen notes that she doesn't like anchovies and modern architecture, and says "potahto" rather than "potato," but she wouldn't dream of imposing her tastes on others.

She is, in principle, opposed to the idea of "community standards." "Community standards confuse me," she charmingly admits. John Donne wrote that "No man is an island," to which she responds, "Well, maybe he should be." "Maybe America should try a bit of that rugged individualism stuff again. The board of standards resides within our own skulls." This does not explain why Ms. Quindlen regularly displays the contents of her skull in a column on the most prestigious opinion page in the country. Presumably she intends to persuade people of her opinion that opinions don't matter. (The observation that this may be self-contradictory would likely be dismissed as an instance of imposing "male logic" on a liberated woman, a dismissal sure to delight the aforementioned chauvinists.)

If persuasion does not work, maybe vituperation will do the job. Quindlen writes that those who object to government financing of homosexual pornography are censorious, parochial, and, in a word, "crazy." "You don't like Federal funding for this stuff? That's OK; the Stealth bomber offends my esthetic sensibilities." The Stealth bomber may or may not be a good idea, but it seems not to occur to the right-brained, nonlinear activity in Quindlen's skull that the decision to acquire that weapon was ratified by an admittedly imperfect democratic polity. Or maybe it is the case that "Dirty Pictures" is really intended as an argument against democracy. She writes, "There is one message in censorship: You are not to be trusted." But Ms. Quindlen makes no secret of the fact that she does not trust other people, especially the "crazy" people with whom she disagrees.

Despite her claim that she intends to be an island of rugged live-and-let-live individualism, in Ms. Quindlen's view of America her fellow citizens are clearly in need of being radically reformed. "We have communities where violence against women is commonplace," she writes, "but love between men is considered a crime against nature." If the analogy with homoerotic exhibitions is to hold, it would seem that in some communities rape and sexual assault are not only approved but also government-funded. (But there we go again with our linear logic.) The *Times*' champion of minding one's business has very expansive views on what is wrong with others. She writes, for instance, of "the American mind" that it seems "to be getting tinier, and tinier, and tinier. That's obscene." Now we do not say that Quindlen's argument, so to speak, is obscene, but it is silly. What it comes down to is that she wants moral judgments about the ordering of our common life to be censored, except for *her* moral judgments about the ordering of our common life. One may be excused for wishing she would follow her own counsel and stay on her island, instead of incessantly preaching from the most prominent soap box in the public square.

To be fair, and against the conspiracy hypothesis, the *Times* has arranged to make it clear that women have no monopoly on silliness. Tom Wicker and Anthony Lewis regularly appear on the same page as Anna Quindlen. Nonetheless, we cannot entirely shake the suspicion that in several editorial rooms, from Chicago to New York and perhaps elsewhere, a decision has been made (by men?) to showcase feminists who would bring maximum discredit upon the movement and offer aid and comfort to their male chauvinist opponents. We sincerely hope that is not the case, for it can only get in the way of hearing women who—unseduced by the silly season of this historical round of feminism—do not fit the stereotype reinforced by chauvinists and some feminists alike. The troublesome thing about conspiracy theories (or even conspiracy hypotheses), however, is that they keep being fed by just enough evidence to keep them alive. Of course we are being half whimsical. It is the whimsical half that will, predictably, draw letters of indignant protest. As one subscriber wrote, "You cannot joke about gender these days." She did not indicate whether that was in the imperative or the indicative. Probably both.

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# While We're At It

■ We should have noted in the August/September issue that my article "Wealth and Whimsy" was originally prepared for a conference of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University. It is being published this month as part of a collection put together by that organization in collaboration with the Institute for Contemporary Studies in San Francisco. The book is *The Capitalist Spirit: Toward a Religious Ethic of Wealth Creation,* Peter L. Berger, ed., ICS press, $18.95 cloth.

■ It is a cliché of long standing that the age of theological giants is past. That is usually said with reference to worthies such as Barth, Tillich, Niebuhr, and Rahner. In our judgment, however, there is a giant among us in the person of Wolfhart Pannenberg of Munich University. His work is the most ambitious, architectonic, and generally impressive theological project in the Christian world today. Eerdmans has just published his *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* a small book with a large argument that helps prepare the way for his *Systematic Theology,* the first volume of which should appear in English within the year (also from Eerdmans). *Metaphysics* is by no means light reading, but it cannot be bypassed by theologians and philosophers who would rescue "God talk" from its religious ghetto and restore it to intellectual discourse that is authentically public.

■ Among those accused of being quislings during the Cold War, no religious institution is so often mentioned as the World Council of Churches. The WCC's Central Committee has now responded to some of the charges raised. Interestingly, there are two statements, one on Romania, and one on Central and Eastern Europe. The reason would seem to be that Christians in Romania have been more outspoken about the WCC's collaboration with Romanian churches that were in bed with the former Communist tyranny. Now the WCC bites the bullet and announces that it "regrets its mistaken judgment in failing to speak adequately" about oppression in Romania. That, presumably, is in the nature of a confession. As for Central and Eastern Europe more generally, well, the WCC is much more general. It repeats the standard position that its policy is to address human rights violations in Communist areas through "quiet intervention." There is this acknowledgment: "However, the actions of the WCC . . . have not always been adequate or fully understood." It seems that, at present, this is as far as the WCC can bring itself to go in recognizing that, for almost half a century, it routinely belittled, denied, or excused the most massive persecution of believers, Christian and other, in the history of humankind.

■ Leo Pfeffer—he of the Pfefferian Inversion by which the First Amendment's "free exercise" of religion is subordinated to "no establishment"—begins a recent essay on church-state relations this way: "According to Lewis Carroll's report, 'When I use a word,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.' Translated into constitutional law language in relation to the First Amendment, the Establishment Clause means just what the Supreme Court or a majority thereof at any particular time wants it to mean, neither more nor less." That commendably candid statement helps explain why a growing number of jurists today are thinking again about whether "original understanding" might have something to do with the proper interpretation of the Constitution. The Humpty Dumpty story, however, does seem a particularly fitting context for Mr. Pfeffer's view of constitutional law.

■ A Sue Robinson has written a novel of sorts. It is called *The Amendment* and is published by an obscure press. The story is about those awful anti-abortionists who push through a constitutional amendment banning abortion. As a result, women die at the hands of quacks operating in dark alleys, and America is turned into a police state. Herbert Mitgang, staff reviewer for the *New York Times,* writes, "There is indeed a plot and not simply a soapbox in this novel." He acknowledges that it is badly written and the story is "farfetched." In short, he thinks it is literary junk. "Still," he concludes, "it deserves to find an audience, especially among sympathetic readers." Sympathetic, that is, not to literature but to the party line on abortion. Exercises in agitprop so crass as *The Amendment* do not usually get a full-scale review and recommendation in "Books of the *Times.*" But the ideologically committed Mr. Mitgang is not one to let nitpicking about literary merit get in the way of doing his part for the cause.

■ Returning visitors from Eastern and Central Europe say they are struck by the recurrence of three expressions: "living in truth," "naming the difference between good and evil," and "civil society." The importance of the first two is readily understandable when one remembers the countless truths that were sacrificed to the "Truth" of Marxist ideology. The importance of "civil society," however, may escape many Americans, for we tend to take for granted what that phrase represents. It has to do with the fact that the state (including the party-state) is but one player among many in society. The "little platoons" (Burke) of family, religion, voluntary association, and economic cooperation belong not merely to "the private sector" but have roles and claims that are clearly civil and public in nature. Living in truth, naming the difference between good

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and evil, civil society—all three are ideas that need revival in this country as well.

■ Kent Hill of the Institute on Religion and Democracy wrote an important book called *The Puzzle of the Soviet Church*. Published in 1989, it does not include all the fast-breaking events touching on religion in the Soviet Union. Of course not. But its failure to include what happened last week is among the putative faults for which the book is flailed in *Christianity and Crisis*. The reviewer's chief criticism, however, is that Hill is an "intrepid neoconservative" who refuses to recognize the "strong evidence that communism has the viability to reform itself." Ah, so that's what communism is doing. Strange that some witless people cannot see that the apparent collapse of communism in theory and practice only masks its continuing viability. It takes a subtle dialectic to grasp these things.

■ "There is nothing in the approach I have recommended that conflicts with Catholic faith, so far as I am aware." That's Garry Wills in the *New York Review of Books*. The qualifier is important, for Mr. Wills is either not very aware or he is disingenuous. Wills is writing about why Mario Cuomo's "double standard" on abortion is not very persuasive. He argues, correctly we believe, that Cuomo's "personally opposed but" position leaves him in a schizophrenic posture that divides personal conviction from public responsibility. Many others have pointed out that difficulty with the Cuomo position. The difference here is that Wills suggests that Cuomo should redefine the position of the Catholic Church. Cuomo's present position is "a political dodge," writes Wills. He goes on: "I know it is unrealistic to expect a Catholic politician to defy the bishops; but I am not considering the man's career, just his argument." The Governor, we expect, will not be inclined to subordinate career to argument, and will therefore probably decline Mr. Wills' invitation to declare himself the authentic *magisterium* of the Catholic Church.

■ *The DuPage Declaration: A Call to Biblical Fidelity* is a spirited statement coming out of several years of consultation among some prominent, mainly Evangelical, Christian thinkers. A first draft was done by Donald Bloesch of Dubuque Theological Seminary, and that was the basis for discussions in DuPage, Illinois, in cooperation with the National Association of Evangelicals. Signers include Richard Lovelace and Betty Moore of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Waldo Werning, a Missouri Synod Lutheran, and Kevin Perrotta, a Roman Catholic renewal leader. In connection with current debates over homosexuality and other "alternatives," the Declaration says this: "We affirm the biblical guidelines for human sexuality: chastity outside marriage, lifelong fidelity and holiness in marriage, and celibacy for the sake of the kingdom." And this on abortion: "We affirm the sanctity of human life at every stage based on our creation in the image of God and our election by God for service in his kingdom. We deny, for example, that the personal choice of either parent takes precedence over the right of the unborn child to life in the service of God's glory. We deplore the continuing traffic of abortion as the slaughter of innocents, which can only be an abomination in the sight of God." Additional signatories are invited and copies of the statement are available from James Heidinger II, Good News, Post Office Box 150, Wilmore, KY 40390.

■ A more than usually observant reporter for the *New York Times* reflects on the difference between the two great abortion rallies in Washington, the prochoice in the spring of 1989 and the prolife this spring. She was struck by the difference in language use, in what we might call universes of discourse. The prochoice rally was dominated by language "about rights and laws, while these people [the prolifers] talk about rights and wrongs." She goes on to suggest that a great gulf is fixed between these two groups. "The only common ground they share is the Washington Mall." A perceptive reporter indeed. To bring the concern about rights and laws into conversation with the concern about rights and wrongs is perhaps the greatest challenge in American public life today. That goal, not so incidentally, might serve as a succinct statement of purpose for this journal.

Sources: Anti-feminist conspiracy: *Christian Century*, March 14, 1990; *New York Times Magazine*, April 15, 1990, and *New York Times*, April 22, 1990. On the WCC, Ecumenical Press Service, 6-10 April, 1990. Pfeffer on constitutional interpretation, *An Unsettled Arena: Religion and the Bill of Rights*, p. 69. Mitgang on *The Amendment* in *New York Times*, May 12, 1990. Criticism of Hill in *Christianity and Crisis*, May 28, 1990. Wills on Cuomo, *New York Review of Books*, June 28, 1990. Rights, wrongs, and laws, *New York Times*, May 1, 1990.

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## NINE NUMBERS

On card after card he sees it,
Along with a harsh identity photograph
And his preposterous signature,
A black line struggling into a name.
The face is Irish, and his name,
And even some of the wallet cards,
The printer prayer to St. John Neumann,
Bohemian bishop in round red cap;
But numbers have no nationality,
They cross frontiers at will.
A girl I know isn't a number to me,
And yet somewhere she is, an ordering
Of digits, a life on file we all have.
Everywhere the stamp of nine numbers.
The calm clerk never blinks an eye
At the sight of her, pushes a button
And gathers information for the towers
Of the future, the ivory silos of the west
Where facts fit into place.
The vast gadgetry that hums all night
In the basements of Manhattan
Feeds on numbers, passes them to us.
They never send a dozen roses
Or light holy candles, but make decisions,
Find secret markets, win chess games,
And fight the wars to come.
They breathe a blue bureaucracy to life,
We think, and we are wrong.
We are the life of nine numbers,
There is no crystal cortex
Chopping thoughts to flute music,
Prometheus is a small man behind a curtain.
We hope for the perfect enemy to fight
And find a night-guard sitting in a green light.
In the end is the number
And the number is nothing. Zeros die in space.
Wisdom flows from God, to us.

**Lawrence Dugan**

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